The Infinite Loops: A Tale of two Realms

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Two separate realms are stuck in a time loop with only a few of the beings living there aware of it happening. Though initially distraught from having to do everything over again and again, soon enough they begin to resort to some interesting ways to blow off steam and keep their sanity. Though no one knows how it happened, only one thing is for certain. Hilarity quickly ensues.

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And so it begins

(A/N: Drabbles/short stories beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments on how this fic works at the end.)

Legends Loop 1.1:

Spyro wasn't sure how it had happened. Maybe with his last breath before he had been dragged off to Ancestors-knew-where, Malefor had cursed him as a last act of vengeance. All Spyro knew was that, from the moment he'd left the swamp to shortly after he had repaired the world, he was reliving over and over again the multitude of trials he had endured during the struggle against the Dark Master.

How many times now had it been? Three. Of that, he was certain.

Though at first he had almost lost his will at the thought of having to relive these hardships over and over again, he had managed to press on in the hope that, sooner or later, this curse would wear off. Thanks to keeping his memories, things were a bit easier due to already being well-trained in the four primary elements, and he managed to get things done moderately quicker than he had on his first 'adventure'.

However, despite the new free time he had, he had yet to find a way out.

"Geez, no matter how many times we end up here, it gets no less freaky."

Spyro didn't respond to his adopted brother as he hopped onto another floating platform, his determined expression unchanging. Sparx seemed to be somewhat affected by this curse he was under, in that occasionally he would keep his memories of what was

happening in the 'loops'. Out of the three 'loops' he had gone through so far, Sparx had been 'awake' for two of them.

Part of Spyro was somewhat grateful for the fact that Sparx didn't always remember. Even though having someone with him who knew what was happening helped him keep his sanity, at least Sparx wouldn't have to endure as much as *he* would.

Sparx flew in front of him. Despite his usual snarky and cowardice nature, there was an expression of concern on his face. "You alright, bro?"

Spyro still didn't say anything. He knew exactly why Sparx had asked him that, and quickly pushed it to the back of his mind. This whole experience had been maddening, yet somehow he had managed to keep a hold on himself. Fighting Gaul, the Destroyer, Malefor, and even restoring the world several times now, he had yet to break down.

However, jumping down onto the final platform, Spyro shivered. This was *always* the hardest part of each loop for him.

"Persistent little fellow, aren't you? No mercy this time."

Spyro narrowed his eyes as an adult black dragoness flew down in front of him. Despite how many times he had gone through this loop, seeing Cynder back in her adult form, when she was under the control of Malefor, had always felt like a massive punch in the gut. The first time he had looped, he'd had to fight back tears as he forced himself to fight her.

His only solace was the fact that, unlike Sparx, Cynder had yet to be 'awake' during one of these loops. At least he didn't have to worry about her being consciously aware while going through these nightmares again. As the dark dragoness went on about the return of the Dark Master, only one thought crossed Spyro's mind.

'Don't worry, Cynder... I promise you, I'll figure a way out of this. We'll have the peace we so rightfully deserve. Until then... Please, just don't wake up...'

Classic Loop 1.1:

Spyro wasn't exactly sure how it had happened. Somehow, it was like someone kept hitting the rewind button on his life. One day, not so long ago, he had just beaten the Sorcerer and was relaxing on Dragon Shores. The next, he was reliving his adventures throughout his life over and over again. At first it didn't seem so bad, getting to redo his most awesome moments over again.

But now, as he walked along the path to *that* dreaded task for one of the orbs, he was starting to get increasingly annoyed.

"Leeeeeets doooo the tiiiiiiime warp agaaaaaaaaaain!" Sparx sang, flying by Spyro's side as he hummed to himself.

"You're not helping, Sparx."

"C'mon, Spyro! I'm just trying to lighten the mood a little."

Spyro shook his head. Thanks to Sparx's special connection with him, while everyone else had lost their memories throughout each 'loop', as Spyro called them, Sparx was one of the few who had managed to keep them. As Spyro watched his best friend sing to himself, he was still wondering if that was a good or a bad thing.

With a sigh, he walked over to the super spring power-up. Walking through it and landing on the platform above, Spyro came face to face with the Breeze Builder he dreaded seeing each loop.

"Spyro! Thank goodness you're here! The Land Blubbers—"

Spyro tuned Fisher out. He had heard this speech more times than he would have liked. 'The Land Blubbers are jerks, hid my gears, I'm

too lazy to get them, please help!'

Spyro sighed. Despite the many times he had done this, he still hadn't gotten the hang of it. He growled. *'If I have to hear 'Trouble with the trolley, eh?'* one *more freaking time... '*

"So, Spyro! Will you please help me?"

Spyro snapped back to reality as Fisher finished. Spyro shot the Breeze Builder a glare, an orb held in his hands...wings...whatever. That was the ransom for this mission.

After the second loop of having to go through this infuriating task, Spyro had rage-quit and hoped that missing one of the orbs wouldn't matter too much. *Unfortunately* , as Spyro soon learned, they were the only way to Dragon Shores and back to the Artisan Realm, which meant he didn't have much choice in the matter.

Spyro glanced at Fisher's eyes, wide and pleading. In the back of his mind, he somehow knew that Fisher knew just how horrific this task was, and that was why he didn't want to do it. Spyro sighed. What exactly was he supposed to do, though? He couldn't just forcefully take the orb from him.

...Could he?

A blast of fire bellowed out as Fisher went sailing out of a nearby window and into a pool of water. Spyro held onto the orb firmly as he turned to head back down to the platform below. Sparx flew in front of him, giving him a stern glare.

"Geez. Harsh, much?"

"Sparx, do you have *any* idea how hard this thing is? I've had to do this trolley thing three times now because of this time warp stuff. *Not* counting the times I've messed up. Once we figure out what's going on and fix it, *then* I'll do this again for the final time. Until then, I *refuse* to do this nightmare anymore!"

Classic Loop 1.2:

Sparx had awakened with a yawn. Bright day in the Artisan world? Check. News crew interviewing some elders about the Dragon Realms? Check. Giant green bolts from the sky about to turn them into stone in three, two, one...

CLASH!

Check.

Yep. They had looped again.

Sparx stretched as he watched the dragons fly around in terror. After the fifth time, it had kind of lost the impact it had originally had. As the last dragon in sight turned to stone, Sparx rolled his eyes.

"Well, I'm pretty sure we know what to do at this point."

"Got that right! Gnasty Gnorc is going down!"

Sparx paused at the voice before raising an eyebrow. Turning around, his eyes went wide at the sight in front of him. Where Spyro normally was supposed to be now stood a red dragon, almost identical to Spyro in body structure outside of the more curved snout. Sparx reeled back a bit in surprise.

"W-wha!? Who are you!?"

The red dragon seemed hurt by Sparx' question as he gave him an annoyed glance. "What's wrong, Sparx? Don't you remember your best bud Flame?"

Sparx was silent for a few seconds. Flame... Wasn't he that dragon Spyro had rescued from Gnasty when Red attacked? The heck was he doing there? Where was Spyro?

Before Sparx could ask any questions, though, Flame had already darted off towards the first dragon statue. As the dragon was freed from his stone prison, Flame smirked.

"Where's Gnasty Gnorc? His butt is *begging* to be flame broiled!"

As Flame and 'that first dragon', as Spyro and he had taken to calling him, started to talk, Sparx scratched his head.

"Well... This...is new," he muttered. Despite the odd circumstances, Sparx was sure of one thing: this was going to be one *interesting* loop.

Spyro sighed as he laid in his bed... Or rather, his bed in *this* loop, anyway. At first it had seemed odd, and part of him had been hopeful these loops had finally broken, but it quickly became apparent that was not the case. Rather, it seemed like these loops weren't always going to be the same thing over and over, a fact that he had realized early on in the morning when he'd woken up in the home of a certain other dragon.

A door creaked and the sound of falling water was heard, followed by a loud *clank* .

"Spyro!"

Several footsteps were heard as the door to 'his room' swung open. In the door frame, a wet pink dragoness stood. Spyro stared bemusedly at his 'sister' as the dragoness picked the bucket up off her head and glared at him.

When Spyro had realized he was going to have to live with Ember in this loop, at first he had panicked. But once he had realized that he was supposedly her brother, and wasn't going to be performing the actions that had caused her to fall head-over-heels for him, he had calmed down considerably.

Ember growled before heading off to get a towel. Spyro laughed as he laid back in 'his' bed. After going through his adventures five times, counting when he had originally done them, a break from them sounded pretty good about now...

Though, he pitied whoever Ember's actual brother was when he got to that trolley.

Legends Loop 1.2:

Spyro sighed as he steadied his nerves. Despite being the fifth time he had done this, standing atop the Well of Souls still intimidated him greatly. The Night of Eternal Darkness was upon them...again. And Gaul was waiting for him down below.

"Freaky. No matter how many times we visit this place, it still gives me the creeps," Sparx said, shivering a bit as he floated close to his brother.

"At least you've only had to redo it three times so far," Spyro said with a sigh.

Spyro shook his head, hunching down as he prepared to jump. Before he did, however, Sparx quickly flew in front of his face. "Woah, hold on a second, bro! I just thought of something!"

Spyro was surprised by Sparx's sudden actions, and he caught himself before he jumped. Narrowing his eyes in slight annoyance, knowing that they didn't have much time before Malefor escaped, Spyro glanced at Sparx.

"What is it, Sparx?" he asked, a little irritably.

Sparx crossed his arms, apparently annoyed by Spyro's annoyance. "Well, you know how we usually fly down there, Gaul zaps you with that staff and causes you to lose your powers, then we all get trapped in a giant time popsicle?"

"Yeah?"

"Why do you let him do that?"

That question caught Spyro off guard, and he raised an eyebrow at his brother. "Huh?"

"You heard me," Sparx said, floating closer towards Spyro. "Why do you let him do that? I mean, you know it's coming, so why do you let him take away your powers? Wouldn't it be easier to smash the staff before he does it, so you don't have to spend five hours smacking away at him with your attacks?"

Spyro paused as he thought about Sparx's logic. It made sense. Fighting Gaul without his powers had always been a pain, no matter how many times he had done it. In honesty...Spyro had never thought about it before. Throughout the five loops he'd done so far, he had always followed them from memory so he didn't cause any major alterations in case the loops broke.

However, if he *did* make sure Gaul didn't steal his powers, how much would actually change? Even if he wasn't thrown into the Convexity beam and became Dark Spyro, Malefor was still supposed to escape on this night, and he would still have to use his Dragon Time to save Sparx, Cynder, and himself...

A determined look appeared on Spyro's face. It was time for some science.

"So, whelp—"

"Yeah, yeah. Night of Eternal Darkness, everything's hopeless, blah blah, get to the zapping!"

Gaul paused, but quickly growled at Sparx interrupting him. Despite the seriousness of the situation, having done this five times already (and seeing the confused look on Cynder's face), Spyro couldn't

suppress a chuckle. This caused Gaul to become more irritated. As he reached for that damn staff that had caused Spyro so many problems before, Spyro quickly returned to the situation at hand.

Just as Gaul went to raise it above his head, a shard of ice struck the green crystal atop it, shattering it and causing the King of Apes to drop the staff. Gaul growled as he shook his throbbing hand. He glared at Spyro, who had a smug look upon his face.

"Clever, dragon. Very clever," Gaul said before he threw his arms back and three metal blades shot out atop each his hands.

Spyro jumped back as Gaul shot a green beam out of the emerald he had in place of his eye. Rolling out of the way as Gaul charged in a spinning tornado of blades, Spyro shot a ball of fire at him.

It seemed that, since he'd managed to keep his powers for this fight, Gaul had no reason to hold back against him. Regardless, at least this hopefully meant that the fight would go by much quicker. And who knows, maybe he wouldn't have to deal with that pesky super-powered evil side this time around.

Classic Loop 1.3:

Spyro was ecstatic as he sat outside the portal to Gnasty's Lair. This was the seventh loop, and he had learned something rather interesting in the previous one.

You see, each dragon had his own personal 'pocket space' they kept their mounds of gems in so they didn't have to lug giant bags around. At first, Spyro hadn't noticed anything *too* out of the ordinary the first couple of loops, but by the sixth loop he had noticed his gem horde had became so big that he couldn't possibly fit anymore into it if he tried. It seemed that Sparx and himself weren't the *only* things that carried over each loop.

"This is going to be freaking awesome!" Sparx exclaimed, looking at Spyro with wide, excited eyes.

Spyro smirked. Though he hadn't liked the idea of having to forcefully get rid of his gems to make room for this, he knew in the end it would be so worth it. With a deep breath to calm himself, Spyro jumped through the portal.

Landing into the all too familiar arena, Spyro looked up to see Gnasty's ugly mug. Not wasting a second, Spyro quickly went ahead with what he was planning.

"So, dragon! You've finally made it! I may have made the mistake of letting you escape under my radar, but no matter, I will finish you off here an—"

BAM!

Gnasty was interrupted when he was smacked in the face by a miniature missile. "Ow! Wha— *what the—?"*

BAM!

"Ugh! Hey, *qu—!* "

BAM!

Sparx was laughing his butt off as Spyro kept pulling the Professor's miniature missiles out of his pocket space. He was going to have to remember to thank the Professor when he met him in this loop.

Putting another one in his mouth and lighting the fuse, Spyro shot it at Gnasty. The blast struck the Gnorc in the face again, and he twirled around for a few seconds as his eyes rolled in his head. Swearing he heard birds chirping, Gnasty slipped into unconsciousness and collapsed.

Spyro fell to the ground as he roared with laughter, rolling around for a few seconds before he looked up at Sparx. The dragonfly looked at

him with a bemused expression. *"Well, that made the battle certainly easier. Wonder how else we can cheap out these battles?"*

Spyro picked himself up, looking at Sparx with a grin. "I have a few ideas, but let's not use the miniature missiles again. That made the battle go by way too quickly."

With one final laugh, Spyro used his atlas book to leave the realm. Things were quiet for a few seconds before a thief holding a key popped out from behind a door.

"Nyan-nyan-nyan... Nyan-nyan?"

Legends Loop 1.3:

Spyro's body was tense as he stood outside the gates to the Dark Master's lair. Despite being the tenth time he was about to do this, it made it no less easy, nor did it make the battle with him any easier. He looked back to Cynder; she was just as tense. At least she still had yet to realize that they were trapped in this time warp, so she didn't have to experience the same events over and over.

The same could *not* be said for Sparx. He had been awake for six of these ten loops now, and was actually starting to become quite bold now that he knew what to expect. He'd actually wanted to come along to Malefor's lair to see the battle go on in person for a change, a chance Spyro was not yet willing to take.

Regardless, he got back to the task at hand. Quickly handling the last of Malefor's minions, he knew it was time. Time to fight this damned dragon once again, restore the world...and be forced to go through it all over again.

Taking a deep breath, he looked back at Cynder. She was always shaking badly at this part, and it made him frown to see her so scared. Without even thinking, he leant forward and nuzzled her cheek, the action surprising her greatly.

"U-uh, th-thanks Spyro. I-I don't think this is the appropriate time for that, though."

Spyro smiled as Cynder looked away, a blush on her cheeks. Spyro had attempted to see if he could get together with her in this loop before he had to repair the world, but so far all of his advances had only caused her to quickly change the subject as a luminous blush appeared on her cheeks. Though it was a bit sad that he wouldn't get to be with her again until these loops were over, it was rather cute to see the normally confident dragoness so flustered.

Still, he knew her words were true. Taking another deep breath, Spyro and Cynder opened the giant door. As they slowly opened, a puff of smoke escaped Spyro's nostrils.

'Okay... Let's get this over with.'

Had it not been for Cynder walking in cautiously every time so far, Spyro would have charged in and seen if he could shut Malefor up before he attempted to turn Cynder on him. Even though he knew she would be alright shortly after, it hurt him every time.

As they walked in, the lights in the room lit up...and Spyro's jaw promptly dropped as his eyes went wide.

"So, you've finally made it!" a surprisingly irritating voice said, *much* higher and scratchier than anything Malefor had ever sounded like. "Well, you are too late! The Destroyer is on his way here as we speak! The world is doomed! *Mwahahahaha* !"

Cynder hunched down, growling as she glared at the monster who had tormented her in her early years. Spyro still had his jaw dropped as he struggled to come up with *any* words for the bizarre sight in front of him.

Where there was normally supposed to be giant sadistic purple dragon, there now stood a short orange... *thing* with a single horn on

its head. The figure scoffed as it threw its robe back and pointed its rod at the two dragons.

"Well, then, dragons! If you honestly think you can stop me, Ripto, the Dark Master, then go ahead and try! You're both doomed either way! *Mwahahahahaaaa!* "

Spyro had no words. In all these loops, this had to be the most *bizarre* one yet.

'Now I'm beginning to regret not letting Sparx come with me... He's never *going to believe this...'*

(A/N: And there we have it. The beginning of a mini side project I plan on doing between Scattered Embers and The Holiday Chronicles.

This series is based off a popular new trend going around the Fanfiction scene started by the FF.N user Innortal. Basically, a collection of drabbles/one-shots, as the popular (and lengthy) explanation goes...

Nobody knows how the loops happened.

They tend involve a complete 'reset' of the series, with only the 'loopers' keeping their memories in between loops. One, or in rare cases, several loopers are called "Anchors" (In this case, the Anchors in this fic/one-shot collection are 'Classic' Spyro and 'Classic' Sparx in the 'classic' world, and 'Legend' Spyro in the 'legend' world), which means they are the first ones to loop and will always retain their memories from every loop.

Occasionally, people close to the Anchors will also keep their memories between loops, as with the case with 'Legend' Sparx. Generally, this only happens rarely at first, but quickly becomes more common as the loops go on.

The resets aren't always *exact* replicas, though. Sometimes, the loop's history will differ greatly from what happened in canon, as with the case with Flame replacing Spyro as the protagonist for a loop. (And, depending on who you ask, Flame and Ember being siblings. Personally, I tend to view them as brother and sister. Sue me for being different. /shot)

On rare occasions, "Cross-Over" or "Fusion" loops can happen. These can involve the home loopers having a guest along for the ride, or another character replacing a canon character. (As is the case in Legends Loop 1.3)

I should note: I do have some cross-over loops with other series planned, but regardless I'm going to keep this in the main section because the focus will almost always be Spyro. I've seen other people do that with their loop fics, so unless I get a note from an FF.N admin telling me to change the category, I don't plan on changing that stance anytime soon.

Vacation Loops are where the Anchor (or other loopers) decide to say 'screw it' and let off steam by doing whatever crazy stuff comes to mind. Generally, there's little or no attempt to maintain the original timeline.

Loop duration is variable, and generally associated with the series in question. For the Spyro loops, for Classic Spyro it's shortly after he's beaten the Sorcerer from Shadow Legacy, and for Legends Spyro it's about an hour after he repairs the world after the events of 'Dawn of the Dragon'... Or, of course, until either of them die. Whichever comes first.

When it comes to the 'original five loopers', that honor goes to Ranma Saotome, Lina Inverse, Shinji Ikari, Harry Potter, and Naruto Uzumaki. I only really know two of those five, but I felt like I should bring this up because if any of them *do* appear in a cross-over loop, they'll be *vastly* different from how they are in canon due to being 'veterans', so to speak.

Generally, more experienced loopers tend to be rather stir crazy at this point. Usually, hilarity ensues pretty quickly.

... And that's pretty much 'The Infinite Loops' in a nut-shell. When I saw this, I knew I *had* to do this with Spyro. Granted, TLoS will likely be much more serious in tone for several loops until the characters get used to it, but that also allows me to explore the more 'fridge horror' aspects of such a plot in a setting that can cause unintentional pain to some...

Also, generally 'The Infinite Loops' tend to be collab/community projects, so I'm going to see if I can get any of my friends to join in on this. I might also start up a new Forum in place of my current one for this for anyone else who wants to join in.

Anyways, for the names of these particular loops...

Legend Loops:

1.1: The Promise

1.2: The usual way isn't always the best way.

1.3: The Legend of Spyro: Ripto's Rage

Classic Loops:

1.1: Trouble with the dragon, eh?

1.2: Flame the Dragon

1.3: Feed it a missile.

We are not alone

(Drabbles beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments at the end of the 'chapter'.)

Classic Loop 1.4:

Spyro smirked. This was his fiftieth loop, and he was getting rather good at all the things he had done on his adventures by this point. It had actually started to get a bit boring, as the battles he had normally found challenging were now over in almost a matter of minutes. Because of this, though, Spyro had spent the last few loops doing something different.

Throughout his later adventures in the 'original timeline', as he was calling it now, Spyro had stumbled across some rather interesting abilities. While most dragons could only shoot fire, Spyro found that he could wield multiple other elements most dragons couldn't. He wasn't exactly sure why this was the case; maybe it had something to do with purple dragons being extremely adept in magic, as he learned when the Sorcerer had attacked, but that was beside the point. What he *did* figure out eventually, though, was that, despite starting his adventure with just fire in the original timeline, these abilities carried over with each loop.

As such, Spyro had decided to see what it would be like if he used a single different element other than fire for his adventures. The electricity loop hadn't been all that different from the main timeline, though seeing Ripto twitching on the ground had been hilarious. The ice loop had been more or less the same, but instead of Ripto twitching on the ground he'd been turned into a raptor popsicle. The water loop had been rather challenging, since water didn't do much damage, but in the end Spyro had managed to pull through. Surprisingly, despite not technically being an element, that one loop where he'd only used Dragon Kata had been rather easy.

But this loop... This loop had been a thing. Sparx had told him he was crazy when he first suggested it, and there had been times where he'd thought he wouldn't make it, but through sheer dumb determination, Spyro had pulled through.

Now standing in front of the 'hulked out' Sorcerer, as Spyro had started calling him, he had a hard time keeping a straight face over what was about to happen.

"I am the only real dragon in the Dragon Realms!"

"Really? Because the other dragons seem pretty real to me."

Spyro suppressed a laugh as the Sorcerer growled. As the Sorcerer shot a blast of dark magic at him, Spyro rolled out of the way and smirked. *'This is going to be hilarious!'*

Without missing a beat, Spyro shot out his 'secret weapon' for this loop. As the attack connected with the Sorcerer, he staggered back in annoyance. Opening his eyes, he saw what had hit him...and promptly glared at Spyro flatly.

"You *must* be joking." he said, expression unchanging. "I am the Sorcerer! The only true dragon in the Dragon Realms! One of the most powerful beings to walk the realms! And you intend to fight me..."

The Sorcerer narrowed his eyes as a translucent orb floated by, popping not a second later.

"...with *bubbles* !?"

Spyro smirked, a few small bubbles floating out of his nostrils before he shot another stream at the Sorcerer.

Legends Loop 1.4:

Spyro sighed to himself. Another loop. Another time he had repaired the planet and got to spent a few precious moments with Cynder...only to have it all ripped away again as he woke up in the swamp he had once called home. How many times had it been now? Over fifty? He was unsure of the actual number. All he knew was that he was getting really tired of it.

"Hey, Spyro. Dragon fruit."

Spyro glanced over, lying on his back in the muddy ground. 'Dragon fruit' had became his and Sparx's code word so Spyro could figure out if Sparx was 'awake' for this loop or not. So far, for the fifty-plus loops, Sparx had been 'awake' for thirty of them.

Sparx floated down next to Spyro, seeing his depressed state. "...You holding up alright, bro?"

Spyro sighed as he turned onto his side. "When will it end, Sparx? I'm not sure how many more times I can go through all of this..."

Sparx frowned, unable to answer that question. For now, all Sparx could do was float down next to his brother and place a hand on his shoulder. "Hey, c'mon now... It can't last forever. Sooner or later we're gonna get out of this."

Despite his reassurance, Spyro barely stirred. Sparx crossed his arms, looking semi-annoyed. He wasn't exactly sure what else to say as he floated in the air for a few seconds.

"...Ya' know, Spyro. If you're feeling a bit burned out, we don't have to save the world *every* loop. I'm sure those cranky ancestor dragons would understand us wanting to take a vacation for a few loops."

"I can't do that, Sparx," Spyro said flatly as he rolled over to look at his brother. "I mean, what if I do and the loops decide to end? The world would be in massive peril because I did nothing. Besides, Cynder..." Spyro sighed and curled up into a ball. "I can't let the Dark

Master keep control of her. Even if she reverts back to *that* each loop... I can't let her suffer like that."

Sparx paused, lowering his head in defeat as he realized he wasn't going to reason with his brother. Turning around, he shrugged. "Well, look on the bright side, then. At least having done this so many times, you've managed to shave a few hours off how long it usually took. At least Cyn doesn't have to stay in 'uber evil dragon' form for as long as she used to."

"Yeah, I suppose..." Spyro said, but paused as Sparx words fully hit him. "Wait, Sparx! What did you just say!?"

Sparx paused, glancing back at Spyro. "I said you've seriously sped up the process. I'm sure Cynder would be grateful for rescuing her somewhat quicker than—hey! Spyro, *wait!* "

Sparx reached out his hand in a vain attempt to stop Spyro. Not a second after Sparx had said that, Spyro had jumped up and darted off into the woods, in the exact direction where they normally fought the apes for the first time. Sparx scratched the back of his head.

"Why do I get the feeling I'm going to regret what I've just said...?"

"Alright you lot! The Dark Master demands we search this swamp for any fierce creatures we can 'recruit' into our army," a rather brutish looking ape said to a bunch of smaller apes.

The group looked around themselves in confusion. In honesty, they had no idea why their master would want them to look for creatures in a swamp. All that was here were those living plants and smaller spiders. Hardly 'army for a new world order' material. Regardless, none of them really had the courage to question the Dark Master's authority.

As they started to head towards the swamp, though, they had heard a whistling sound. Hearing it come from above, they looked up as

their eyes went wide and their mouths dropped. They didn't even have a second to fully process it as a rain of sharp ice shards flooded down upon them.

"Spyro! Spyro, bro! Where are you?" Sparx called. He was currently floating above the tree line, as past experiences had taught him that flying around the swamp ground usually resulted in him almost becoming a snack for some of the plant life there.

Putting his hand above his eyes to block out the sun, he saw a purple splotch flying his way. "Hey! Spyro! What the heck is going oooo— *ooooooooooooon!* "

Sparx barely had time to dodge out of the way as Spyro darted past him, the force of the wind in his wake tossing the unfortunate dragonfly around. Eyes spinning as he grabbed his head to steady himself, Sparx saw Spyro heading back to their parents' house.

"Spyro! Wait up!"

Sparx groaned, trying in vain to keep up with his current speedster of a brother.

Nina and Flash looked at the note in front of them in disbelief. Was this one of Spyro and Sparx's games? No matter how many times they reread it, it just didn't make sense.

"Dear Mom and Dad:

Sparx and I are off to save the world. Be back in a few years.

Love, Spyro."

Ignitus sighed to himself. Things were truly hopeless. The other Guardians had been kidnapped, and the Dragon Temple had been

overrun by apes. Truly, despite their struggles, the Dar—

"Spyro! For Pete's sake man, *wait up!* "

Ignitus raised his head at the shouting as, not a second later, the sight he had never thought he would see appeared in front of him.

"You—"

"Yeah! Legendary purple dragon, here to turn the tides of war! Name's Spyro! What's that? The Dragon Temple has been taken over by apes? *Don't worry I got it be right back!* "

Ignitus blinked as the purple dragon of legend, his mouth somehow wagging faster than even Volteer's, darted off towards the temple. Not a second later, a golden dragonfly came floating by, panting heavily.

"Wings...feel...like... *fire...* "

Ignitus stood in wide-eyed silence at the bizarre scene that had just taken place. Feeling like the stress of everything might have gotten to him, he shook his head. Had it not been for the sound of explosions and apes yelling in terror, Ignitus would have thought he'd imagined the whole thing.

Maybe it was because he wanted to make sure he wasn't crazy, but Ignitus made his way to the temple. Surprisingly, the main gate that had been blocked off by the apes was now wide open. Cautiously walking in, he saw multiple spirit gems littered all around the place. All the doors had been opened, and the statue of Malefor—which they still hadn't gotten around to removing, despite the millennia of Malefor being their sworn enemy—had already descended into the floor of the dojo.

Standing in the middle, Spyro sat impatiently tapping his claw. Sparx was atop the dragon's head, desperately trying to catch his breath. Ignitus blinked a few times.

"Yes, this is really happening. I got rid of all the apes! By the way, look what I can do!"

Before Ignitus could even speak, Spyro had activated the training dummies and was currently throwing around fireballs and streams of fire left and right, Sparx holding on for dear life. Ignitus' mouth hung open as Spyro unleashed his fire fiery, taking care of the last few dummies as he floated down to the ground.

"Pretty cool, huh? By the way, the other guardians have been captured! I'm off to Dante's Freezer to rescue Volteer now! *Be right back!* "

Once again, before Ignitus could say anything, Spyro had already darted off towards the frozen wasteland through the balcony. Ignitus paused before he slapped himself, if only to make sure he was still sane.

As Spyro flew through the air at breakneck speeds, Sparx holding on as best he could, he had a determined look about him. This wasn't going to be easy, even with the added skills he had acquired through the loops, but for just this one loop...he would hopefully get to save Cynder from her nightmare a few days earlier than normal.

Classic Loop 1.5:

Sparx tried his best not to laugh. Not all loops had followed Spyro's adventures to a T, but this so far had been the most entertaining one. He was currently in the Magic Crafter's world, flying from floating island to floating island. He was pale blue at the moment, a far cry from his usual golden color he had become used to maintaining throughout the loops thanks to Spyro's ever increasing skills... Of course, that meant nothing if Spyro wasn't actually his partner for the loop.

"Oof!"

Sparx glanced over at his current 'best friend' in this loop. The pink dragoness had toppled over in her glide and was currently picking herself up with a stretch. Ember sighed. "Why couldn't the dragons get turned to stone in a place with less bottomless pits?"

Sparx chuckled. When he had woken up to see Ember by his side instead of Spyro, he'd nearly busted up laughing. All in all, though, he had to give the dragoness *some* credit. He hadn't even expected her to make it out of the Artisan Realm, yet somehow she had managed to make her way through it all while saving every dragon up to that point.

Though trying to watch her fight Gnasty's tougher minions was a bit painful, Ember was surprisingly clever when it came to figuring out puzzles. She'd even managed to figure out that insane super charge jump in Tree Tops on her first go, a feat Spyro was still struggling to remember despite all the loops he'd been through, and Flame had rage-quit after his fifth attempt during the loop in which Sparx had ended up with him. Though, the daring leaps she'd had to make to get through had shaken her up greatly for a good while after.

Sparx floated by with a bemused expression as Ember flamed one of the fools to lower a platform. "Sorry, but I really need to get up to one of the higher areas!"

"Ember, I don't think you need to apologize to them. Didn't that one dragon say they don't feel pain?"

Ember glanced up at Sparx, a sheepish expression on her face. "I know, but unlike Gnasty's minions, which are basically gems, these guys are still living creatures."

Sparx shook his head. Another thing he had learned about this dragoness throughout this loop was that she didn't like causing harm to non-animated-unanimated objects. Even though he had assured her that the small creatures around the Realms were just basically magic butterflies used to restore his health, she didn't like the idea of hurting them, even if it meant it would put herself at risk.

Sparx glanced around the Realm. Outside of Ember, there were still no signs of anything *too* out of the ordinary this loop. Part of him was actually rather depressed by this. Though watching Ember flounder about was amusing, he had hoped that something new would come from it.

He heard Ember sigh. Nothing too new. Despite actually being rather excited when the adventure had started, she'd quickly realized just how dangerous it could be. At least she didn't constantly complain about it, though, which was more than he could say about Flame.

"Where's Spyro when you need him?"

Sparx paused when he heard Ember mutter those words. He glanced over with a raised eyebrow. Ember was still looking down at the ground with an exhausted look on her face, unaware of her dragonfly companion looking at her. Sparx quickly looked away when she lifted her head and started to head towards a nearby portal.

Had she really just mentioned Spyro? How was that possible? She shouldn't know who Spyro was in this loop. Spyro was nowhere to be seen in the Artisan Realm, which meant they couldn't have both been living there unlike that one loop where Spyro had nearly jumped out of his scales at the realization. There's no possible way she could have known him.

'Unless...'

Sparx glanced down at Ember as they jumped through the portal. Could it be possible that Spyro and him weren't the only ones looping? But how? Ember had never shown any sign of knowing she was caught in a time-loop before...

'I'm going to have to tell Spyro about this next loop... Speaking of which, I wonder where he is in this loop?'

Spyro groaned as he laid on 'his' bed. It looked like this was going to be another vacation loop, though it was going to be decidedly less awesome than the time before. He sighed as he looked around 'his' room and cringed slightly.

"Ack!"

Spyro chuckled as he heard a splash of water followed by a clanking sound. Rapid footsteps headed towards 'his' door, and it swung open to reveal a red dragon with a bucket on his head. Flame glared at Spyro as he lift the bucket off him, completely soaked from the prank.

"Not cool, sis!"

'Spyra' laughed. Though torturing Flame was going to be fun, for 'her' this loop couldn't end soon enough.

Legends Loop 1.5:

Spyro looked around the arena of the pirate ship. How many times had he been here now? He'd stopped counting after one hundred and thirty two. Despite this, he still couldn't help but wonder each time how this massive ship could stay afloat in the air even with magic.

Spyro's skills had become rather impressive for his age. Or rather, the age these loops keep sending him back to. Though he had struggled at first in this arena, now he was able to mop the floor with the challengers in little under a few seconds. In honesty, if he wanted to, he could easily bust out of his cell now with the earth element and tear these ships a new one. However, there was always one thing that kept him from doing just that.

"Just like old times."

Spyro stood firm as he watched Cynder circle him. He wasn't sure if Cynder 'fighting' him was one of the things that allowed her to 'escape' these pirates, but he didn't want to take the chance.

This part had always worried him, though not for the same reason it had originally. He had long since learned the fight was merely a ruse for Cynder to attempt her 'escape plan', which, as Spyro had found out in one loop, basically meant hitting the captain in the face with poison when she got a clear shot at him. Learning from experience that said tactic rarely *ever* ended well for either of them, Spyro had developed several strategies over the loops to make sure Cynder could never get a clear shot at him. As horrible as it sounded, getting caught by the apes actually ended *better* for her than what the captain would end up doing to her—and what he would end up doing to the captain.

The problem, though, was the timing. Despite most things staying pretty much the same during each loop, the apes attacking the ship always seemed to be random. This meant Spyro would often have to keep the ruse up while making sure nothing bad happened to her, which looked like it was about to be the case once again.

Spyro rolled out of the way as Cynder came spinning at him. He could never tell if Cynder honestly thought that such an attack would seem believable to the audience, or if she was just really bad at fake fighting. Spyro had pretty much learned all her moves during this 'fight' by now, so dodging them wasn't the problem.

The problem was making it seem like he was actually trying to fight.

Cynder charged forward and went to slash at Spyro's feet. This seemed to be one of her more preferred tactics for this 'battle', and thus Spyro easily kept one step ahead of her. The audience started to boo, but whether or not it was because they didn't like him or the fact that it appeared like he was in no real danger was beyond him.

Spyro rolled back and jumped onto the side of the wall before he pushed on it and flew to the other side of the arena. Spinning

around, he saw Cynder heading his way. Usually, by now, this was when the apes would strike. It almost saddened him a little when he thought about it. Cynder shortly escaping the pirates only to get captured again by the apes. Part of him wanted to follow Cynder to see what that was like for her, but he knew that for each loop he had a 'part to play', so to speak.

Cynder jumped into the air, flipping as she went to bring her tail down on Spyro. Spyro easily side-stepped, causing the crowd to boo. He could really care less about what the crowd thought, though.

Glancing over, he saw Cynder had gotten her tail blade stuck in the wooden arena and was now struggling to free it with an annoyed look on her face. Spyro chuckled. It was rather rare that would happen in one of the loops, but it was always a funny sight when that happened... Though, Spyro had learned the hard way not to try to help her free it.

Spyro watched with an amused expression as Cynder freed her tail and looked at him with a mock angry glare. Or maybe she really was annoyed at Spyro chuckling at her. It was rather hard to tell. All Spyro knew was that, thanks to these loops, the glare that he used to find dreadful was actually starting to become rather cute.

These loops were really starting to desensitize the original strife he had felt going through this for the first time. Though he had dreaded this part originally, now it had more or less devolved into a play fight between him and his future love.

Dodging another fury of slashes with ease, Spyro couldn't hide the out-of-place smile on his face. The apes would be there any second now to tear these ships a new one, which actually depressed him in a way. Part of him wanted to spend a few more seconds with Cynder, even if she was faking a fight with him at the moment.

As Cynder had to pause to catch her breath for a few seconds, Spyro chuckled. Not a second later, a funny thought crossed his mind. Though he tried to keep things as close to how they actually

happened the first time, surely *this* wouldn't mess with things *too* much. Besides, he was getting tired of having to wait until he repaired the world each loop for this.

As Cynder glanced up and tried to put on a mock angry expression, she was caught off guard by what happened next.

Spyro jumped forward and pressed his lips against Cynder's, the black dragoness' eyes going wide as a blush appeared on her face. The audience went silent at the sight, unsure of what was going on.

Cynder pulled back, staggering backwards, the blush still on her face. Struggling to steady her thoughts, her mouth moved in an attempt to say something, but no words came out. Predictably, the audience started to boo, though Spyro swore he could have heard at least one sweet sounding 'Aaaaw' amongst the disapproval.

Before Cynder could say anything, the ship shook. Just like Spyro had predicted, the ships were now being attacked by the apes. Though Cynder hesitated for a few seconds, she darted into the opposite gate as it crashed down. The ship's mast fell down soon after to prevent his pursuit as things started randomly bursting into flames. Spyro chuckled.

'It's amazing how doing something so many times can change one's feelings about it.'

With that, Spyro darted to the gate he normally escaped through.

Classic Loop 1.6

"Wait, wait, wait... You're telling me Ember actually mentioned me despite being in a loop where she shouldn't know I exist?"

"I know it sounds weird, Spyro, but I heard what I heard. She specifically mentioned you, I swear!"

Spyro groaned. That wasn't what he had hoped to ever hear. Out of all the possible people who could end up looping with him, *why* did it have to be his number one fangirl? Spyro shook his head as he glared down at the arena below.

"Well, look on the bright side. At least we know we're not the only ones!"

Spyro glared at Sparx, shaking his head at the not-so-reassuring thought. "It still doesn't make sense, Sparx. I've encountered her several times now in these loops, and in almost none of them did she mention that she knows she's looping."

"Well, maybe unlike us, it's not every time for some people?" Sparx suggested as he scratched his chin.

"Maybe," Spyro muttered as he jumped off his throne. "For now, though, let's just deal with it when it comes up. I'm not exactly looking forward to the idea of spending eternity trapped in a loop with Ember."

Sparx chuckled at the annoyance in Spyro's voice, but nonetheless decided to humor Spyro. This was the first time a loop like this had ever happened, and Spyro was surprisingly excited by it. Sparx didn't know if he should be worried by that, considering what it was, but he didn't really have time to think about it as the doors to the arena opened.

"Spyro the dragon! In the name of Avalar, your reign of terror ends now!" a high and scratchy voice yelled, the robed figure pointing his scepter at the dragon.

Spyro smirked as he saw Ripto waddle into the arena. In almost every loop, he had played the hero or at least been a decent dragon, so the idea of playing as a villain for a loop was an interesting change of pace. Of course, he made sure not to *really* hurt anyone, but that didn't stop him from playing it for all it was worth.

"Fool! Do you honestly think you stand a chance again me, Dark Master Spyro!? You are even a bigger fool than I had first thought! *AAHahahahahaha!* "

Sparx face-palmed, half from Spyro's overblown performance, half from the title he had chosen for himself.

"The 'Dark Master'? Seriously?" Sparx asked, giving Spyro an odd look. *"That has to be the most generic, uncreative title for a big bad to give themselves ever."*

Spyro glared at Sparx. "C'mon! You try thinking of evil-sounding titles on the fly!"

Sparx sighed as Spyro jumped down to the arena below to face this Realm's 'hero'. He was having *way* too much fun being the bad guy...

Legends Loop 1.6:

Spyro looked up at the night sky. So far, this loop had been pretty much standard. He hadn't tried to speed run it like that one loop where he nearly caused himself to die of dehydration, though getting to spend a few extra days with Cynder before the events of the Night of Eternal Darkness had been nice. Sparx was awake for this loop and, despite his attempts to convince him to start messing with people to pass time, Spyro had made sure to keep this loop as close to how things actually went as possible.

He couldn't quite place it, but something about this loop felt different...

It had been about a day or so since he had saved Cynder from Convexity. Again. Despite being two hundred something loops in now, seeing her like that every time depressed him greatly. At least she hopefully wouldn't remember it once whatever was causing this nightmare broke.

Spyro sighed. About now, Cynder should be coming out onto the balcony to ask him what was wrong. Spyro scanned the back of his mind. He could never remember what exactly he had said to her, likely something about Malefor, but over the loops he had managed to come up with a few responses that more or less kept the same meaning.

"Yo, Spyro!"

Spyro turned his head, a bit annoyed to see Sparx there. "What are you doing here, Sparx?"

"Well, hi to you too."

Spyro sighed. "You know what I mean, Sparx. Cynder's going to be coming out here any second now, and I don't want you messing with her." Spyro narrowed his eyes at his brother. "Need I bring up the loop where you got Volteer to—?"

"Oh, c'mon bro! You can't expect me to do the same exact things for every loop I'm awake in!" Sparx said, crossing his arms. "I mean, after one hundred and fifty something loops, things tend to get repetitive. Besides, Volteer was fine once the uncontrollable twitching wore off!"

Spyro shook his head before looking back at Sparx. "Sparx, I get that you're getting tired of this. I am too. Can you at least leave Cynder out of your pranks, though?"

"Fine, fine. That wasn't the reason I came out here, though."

Spyro raised an eyebrow at Sparx's comment. It had sounded so serious in comparison to how Sparx normally sounded, which was enough to make Spyro worry. "What is it, Sparx?"

Sparx diverted his eyes as he looked away. "Well...it's Cynder."

Spyro narrowed his eyes as he felt his blood run cold. "What about Cynder?"

"Well, you know how when we rescue Cyn normally, she's usually mopey for a good few days before she goes off on the quest that turns us all into a living popsicle?"

Spyro's muscles tensed up. Though Sparx hadn't told him what was going on yet, he got the feeling that he wasn't going to like it. "Yeah..."

"Well, lately she's been even more mopey than usual. Normally in the loops I've been through, I've seen her around the temple once or twice," Sparx said before turning back to Spyro. "Well, so far she has yet to leave her room in this loop. No one at the temple has heard a peep out of her."

Spyro paused as he let Sparx's words sink in. Spyro looked at the doorway. Normally, Cynder would have already been there by now. That, combined with what Sparx had said, started to worry him greatly. This odd feeling he had about this loop, it couldn't be...

'No...'

"Spyro...?"

'No-no-no-no-NO!'

Before Sparx could say anything more, Spyro darted off into the temple. Sparx barely got out of the way in time as he spun from the wind blowing behind him. Eyes spinning in his head as he grabbed his antenna to make it stop, he looked back at the temple. He just barely caught the distraught look on Spyro's face as he darted by.

'Please no!' Spyro thought to himself as he ran through the temple halls, unable to hide the worry on his face. *'Please... Just let this be one of those 'variation' loops! Please just let this be a minor*

variation! Don't let this be what I think it is... Please *don't let this be what I think it is!'*

It didn't take long for Spyro to make to the outside of Cynder's room. Panting heavily, he stared at it. Part of him didn't want to open it, worried that if he did, his greatest fear about this whole mess would be realized. However, if what he had been worried about was true, then he knew Cynder was going to need someone now more than ever. Taking a deep breath, Spyro opened the door.

At first, he didn't see anything. It wasn't until he really looked around did he see a black ball huddled up in the corner. Spyro gulped. This wasn't a good sign.

"C-Cynder?"

The black ball stirred for a few seconds before the dragoness glanced at him. Spyro could see the fear in Cynder's eyes, but he wasn't sure what it was about. He hoped it was for something completely unrelated, but at the back of his mind he knew what the real reason was. As much as he wanted to delude himself that this wasn't the case, he knew he needed to ask.

"Cynder... Do you remember?"

At first, Cynder said nothing as she stared at Spyro.

"R-remember what?" Her voice was shaky as she asked.

"Remember all of this. All the stuff we've already done. All of what's happened before."

Cynder raised her head at Spyro's words. In the back of his mind, Spyro cringed as he saw her eyes. In them was something he had hoped he wouldn't see again until all this mess was over. Until he didn't have to worry about it must be like—the torture it must be—and when they could finally be together.

In her eyes was recognition.

"Spyro, what the heck is going on?" she asked as she got up and headed over to him. Her voice was still rather shaky, and she was having a hard time walking as her legs shook.

"Please, *please* tell me we're in a nightmare! Please tell me that this isn't real... Please tell me that I...I didn't..."

Spyro frowned, unable to say anything as Cynder walked up to him with pleading eyes. All he could do was give the dragoness a hug. Cynder almost collapsed in his arms. Spyro's worst fear had been realized.

Cynder had consciously gone through reliving her experiences as the 'Terror of the Skies'.

Cynder said nothing as she held onto Spyro, shaking badly as she closed her eyes. Spyro wrapped his wings around her. The experience had been traumatizing when it happened to her before, so he couldn't begin to imagine what it was like to go through it a second time. Spyro closed his eyes as he rested his head on hers.

He knew now, more than ever, he *needed* to find a way to break these loops...

(A/N: A bit of minor mood whiplash at the end there. Sorry if it didn't seem too emotional... I'm not all that great at writing emotional scenes. That's why I mainly do comedy and action. lol

Anyways, looks like the Spyro's and Sparx' aren't the only ones in these loops anymore. Wonder how that'll effect things in the "future" so to speak? For now though, it seems both Spyro's have two very different approaches when it comes to these loops...

Anyways, it's time for the loop names.

Classic Loops:

1.4: Spyro used Bubble beam! It's super effective!

1.5: Ember the Dragoness.

1.6: Ripto the Raptor: Spyro's Rage.

Legends Loops:

1.4: LAS: Loop Assisted Speedrun.

1.5: Loops have that effect on people.

1.6: Worst fear realized...)

Escaping Fate

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments at the end of the chapter.)

Classic Loop 1.7

Spyro was proud of himself. He had no idea how many loops in he was at this point, and even though he had attempted this several times in the past, never once did he actually think he'd pull *this* off.

It had taken several loops hanging out with two of his greatest enemies, getting to know the quickest way to get them to *not* attempt to smash, blast, or kill him on sight, and even then he had to figure out the correct way to word things not to tick either of them off... But in the end, it was *so worth it* .

"So, *how* many loops have you done again?"

Spyro glanced over to Hunter. It hadn't been long before the cheetah had started to occasionally loop with him, a fact that Spyro was rather happy about. It was nice to finally have someone *other* than just Sparx to talk to for a change. Admittedly, he still had to check out if Ember really was looping too, but he wasn't exactly in *too* much of a hurry with that.

"Don't know. Lost count after four hundred."

Had it really been that many times? Felt like it, at least.

"Four hundred!?" Hunter exclaimed, jaw nearly falling off as he stared wide-eyed at Spyro. "What have you been doing all this time!?"

Spyro paused, looking up as he thought.

"Well, the first few times around, I mostly stuck to how things went on my adventures the first time. When that started to get boring, I started to take some 'shortcuts' to make things go by quicker. When that got boring, I started bringing stuff with me through the loops to mess around with some of the more annoying baddies," Spyro said before he glanced at Hunter.

"When *that* started losing its charm, I started to see what it would be like going through each loop with a different element. Eventually got enough of that too, and now...here we are."

Spyro glanced down at the chaos below. Ripto had teleported out of the way as a mighty club slammed into the ground. Gnasty growled as Ripto reappeared in a flash of light.

"You short freak! How dare you call me ugly!"

"How dare you call me short! You *pig-faced moron!* "

Sparx watched in amusement as he held out a bag of popcorn towards Spyro. *"Popcorn?"*

Spyro took the bag and started to munch on some popcorn. The ground shook as fireballs and magic blasts flew everywhere. The whole thing had started through a bet with Sparx over who was the stronger villain. Spyro's bet was on Ripto. He may have been scrawny, but his magic packed a punch.

Passing the popcorn to Hunter, Spyro began to think. So far, for the loops where he actually *was* himself, for the most part he had been following his adventures with a few twists. However, having spent the last few loops trying to get *this* insanity set up, Spyro had learned a few things.

Even if he skipped out on a few of his adventures, the loop would end around the same time he would have beaten the Sorcerer in the 'main timeline', as he called it. There was no real punishment to dying, either, as he would just wake up with Gnasty turning the

dragons to stone again... Though, the less said about how he had found *that* out, the better. Having grown bored of repeating his adventures, he began to wonder...

'What kind of crazy stuff can I pull that I normally couldn't?"

Legends Loop 1.7:

Cynder didn't know if she was being punished for her sins, but it certainly *felt* like it.

Five times now.

Five times, not counting when she had originally been through this nightmare. Five times she'd had to relive her actions as the Terror of the Skies.

The worst part was that she could do nothing about it, either. At least for the loops so far she had been conscious for, at the end she had managed to resist Malefor's control when he attempted to turn her evil again... But from now up until when Spyro rescued her from Convexity, she had no choice but to watch her body commit these terrible acts over and over again.

It was maddening. She hadn't even been able to speak for all the loops she had been conscious for so far. Even with Spyro's reassurance, it did little to help.

The first time it had happened, she refused to leave the temple. Even when Malefor had called for her to head for the Well of Souls, she'd refused to leave. Spyro had been by her side the entire time as the guardians prepared for Malefor's eventual escape. It had been interesting to see what the three years had been like when they weren't frozen for a change, with Spyro being a driving force in the war against him. Surprisingly, though, from what Spyro had said, in the end things didn't change much.

The second time, she was still badly shaken from it. Once again resisting Malefor's call, this time around she had at least managed to pull herself together enough to assist Spyro on the battlefield, but as always the end was the same. Failing to stop the Destroyer, the ancestors dragging Malefor off to whatever hell-hole he deserved, and Spyro pulling the world back together. From what he had said, he'd actually become quite good at it.

In the third loop, though, Cynder had learned of just how many times Spyro had 'looped' compared to her. From what he'd said at the time, he was on his three hundred and fifty-something loop. The thought made Cynder's blood run cold. She knew this curse was obviously because of her...because of what she'd done.

Why on earth did Spyro have to suffer because of her? It wasn't fair. He had done nothing wrong.

From the fourth loop onward, Spyro and her had come to an agreement that she wasn't so sure of at first. Even when she was aware of what was going on, she would still 'go through the motions' of the events leading up to the Night of Eternal Darkness. Though it sounded odd, they had both agreed spending three years as a popsicle was better than spending three years fighting pointless battles. Plus, it helped that Spyro had already done it so many times now that he could avoid getting thrown into the Convexity beam, which would forcefully turn him into his dark form.

Cynder glanced down. A chain was placed around her neck and she was being suspended over the focal point for the Convexity beam that had turned her into the Terror of the Skies. Looking up with a disdainful glare, she saw Gaul beginning to initiate the ritual.

"Soon, my subjects! Soon, great power will be ours!"

Cynder huffed. If only this idiot knew...

This was how every loop where she was 'awake' started for her. Moments before she became *that* and had to relive her sins over

again. The first time, she had freaked out as much, if not greater than when it had 'actually' happened to her. The second and third, she had struggled to escape, but to no avail.

However, in the last loop she had been awake for, she had learned a rather interesting fact from Spyro.

Gaul smirked, turning to his subjects.

"Now, my subjects! The new era begins no—!"

Though Gaul's voice usually carried confidence to it at this part, his voice fell flat as he saw the sight that was in front of him. Or rather, the sight that *wasn't* in front of him. Where Cynder was normally supposed to be, all that was there were a pair of chains hanging limp.

Gaul paused, looking around as his eyes narrowed. Where the heck had that little brat—?

Gaul gasped as a sharp object pierced through his chest, right through his heart. As it pulled out and caused him to cough up blood, the mighty ape king fell to the ground.

Cynder shook the blood off her tail. At least she didn't have to worry about going through that horrid process of having the metal blade casted onto her tail. Despite still being in extreme danger, she couldn't help but smirk at the act of vengeance.

Just like Spyro had said. Even though she had yet to be touched by the darkness in this loop, she still had her elements from the previous loops. Namely, her shadow element.

Glancing back down, she saw the apes looking up in shock. She narrowed her eyes before bolting towards the door. She could hear them scream in rage as she ran down the corridor, but she didn't care.

Even if this attempt to escape fell flat on its face, and even if she ended up dying because of it...at least for this loop, she would *not* spend it being Malefor's pawn.

Classic loop 1.8:

Spyro chuckled to himself. So far this loop had been pretty standard. Outside of a few *minor* changes to speed up his first few adventures—and some minor messing with his friend's heads for his own amusement—he had followed his adventures to a T to this point. Sparx buzzed by his head, giving the dragon a pleading look.

"C'mon, Spyro! Can you please *tell me what you have planned for this loop? Because, so far, it's been pretty standard."*

Spyro smirked. He *still* had no idea what he had been thinking when he came up with this idea. Turning to Sparx, he gave him a sly look. "Like I said, Sparx... Either this is going to be hilarious, or it'll make this loop a living nightmare for me."

"You've been saying that this entire loop! Please, give me something a bit more to go on!"

Spyro looked ahead of him. He was just beginning his adventure where he took down Red, and coming into sight was *that* dark gem. Spyro felt a bit of anxiety at the sight. He was starting to have second thoughts. He had learned all too quickly that trying to *'forcefully'* reset a loop when one of his pranks backfired on him was a very, *very* bad idea.

Spyro shuddered, memories of that tall, no-faced freak in the suit forever burned into his brain. Despite going several loops without seeing it again, he *still* felt like it was watching him...

Spyro shook his head. Regardless of how he felt now, he was already here. He had made a commitment early on in the loop to not

back down on this part. Spyro sighed. He *really* hoped this wouldn't backfire on him.

"Spyro!"

As if on cue, Ember was heading his way. In order for this to work, Spyro had to listen to Ember go on about her not-so-secret crush on him. It was a bit annoying, but from it Spyro had managed to figure out that, so far, having said what she usually said word-for-word at this point, he could tell Ember wasn't awake for this loop.

He still believed Sparx had just been messing with him when he'd said Ember was looping too, having yet to see a loop where she was aware they were in a time warp. Sparx still swore that she was, though, and to his credit, Spyro rarely ever followed the parts where he encountered Ember on his adventures.

Tuning back into reality, he saw the sly look on her face. He knew what was coming next. Spyro braced himself. In order for this to work, he needed to keep a straight face and *not* gag. Good thing he'd had all the time in the world to practice it.

"...I know you really like me."

Spyro smirked. *'Here goes nothing...'*

"Was it really that obvious?"

Sparx nearly fell out of the air when he heard Spyro utter those words. Ember's eyes went wide in shock as she placed her paw in front of her mouth. "R-really...!?"

It took every bit of willpower Spyro had to keep a straight face. He honestly wasn't sure how he was doing it, but *somehow* he hadn't choked on his words yet.

"Oh, yes! Ember, enough of this game! I've loved you ever since I first set eyes on your radiant pink scales!" Spyro proclaimed in the

hammiest fashion he could muster before running and grabbing the dragoness in a great big hug.

Sparx's mouth nearly fell to the ground as his eyes went wide. Had these loops finally caused Spyro to lose it?

Ember seemed rather confused by Spyro's sudden affection. She had always dreamed of this, but never thought it would actually happen. She went to speak, but Spyro cut her off. "Oh, Ember my love! Marry me! We'll have the happiest life together!"

"M-marry!? B-b-but we're still kids!"

"It doesn't matter! Our love can overcome that!" Spyro said, somehow becoming even hammier as he said these words. He honestly had no idea *how the heck* he was keeping a straight face at this point, but he was too far in to back down now.

Ember let out a slight 'eek' as Spyro hugged her tighter. She gulped, giving a sheepish grin at the overly big smile on Spyro's face. "U-uh, maybe we can start out a bit slower...?"

"But, Ember, my dear! My love burns for you with the passion of a thousand burning suns!" Spyro said, his eyes wide as he gazed at Ember.

Ember looked at Spyro's somehow overly wide eyes, fear flickering across her face at the uncanny feeling it was giving her. She gulped, glancing away as she cleared her throat. "H-huh? Oh, yes! I think I hear my mom calling! She wanted me to be back soon!"

"But *Embeeeeeeeeeee—!* "

"So-sorry, Spyro! But my mom really needs me! I need to help iron the plants *talk to you later bye!* "

Spyro watched as Ember struggled out of his grasp and took off like a rocket. Spyro took a few seconds to make sure Ember was far out

of earshot before he started to chuckle as the creepily happy face he wore finally started to give way.

Finally, he busted up laughing as he fell back, rolling on the ground. As he glanced up at Sparx, the completely dumbfounded look on his face caused Spyro to laugh even harder as tears came to his eyes, pointing at Sparx as he fell onto his stomach.

Finally catching onto Spyro's trick, Sparx shook his head before he shot Spyro a glare.

"Uh, sorry, but... Exactly whose *head are you trying to mess with here?"*

Spyro wiped away tears from his eyes as he tried to subdue his laughter, glancing at Sparx with a smirk. "Sorry, Sparx. You should have seen the look on your face, though!"

Sparx sighed, glancing down before he looked back up at Spyro. *"So, exactly what possessed you to do that?"*

Spyro rolled over with a bemused expression, resting on his back while he still had fits of chuckling. "Well, you know how Ember's always bugging me to get me to like her? Well, for this loop, I decided to grant her wish and then some."

Spyro laughed before he rolled over and looked at Sparx again. "Judging from her reaction, I get the feeling I'm not going to have to worry about her for the rest of this loop."

Sparx's face went flat as Spyro continued to chuckle to himself. Clearly Spyro had no understanding of the meaning of 'double standards.'

Legends 1.8:

Once again, he was back at the swamp. Spyro groaned as he laid on the ground, looking up at the stars. By this point, he wasn't even trying to *guess* how many loops he'd been through. If it wasn't for the fact that repetition and getting to practice his abilities in the meantime made doing this over and over again much easier as time went on, he probably would have lost it by now.

Spyro gazed at the stars. He wasn't supposed to be out here at this time of night, and Flash and Nina would likely give him an earful for it, but he didn't really care. He had fought Malefor countless times at this point. He was pretty confident he could easily handle whatever the swamp could throw at him.

Spyro had pretty much tried everything he could think of to try to break these loops. Proving to the Guardians that he had done this countless times now by predicting everything that would happen with shocking accuracy, he felt disheartened that, even when he had told them early on, even in the years before Malefor tried to destroy the world, they could come up with no answers or any way out of this.

Then he had tried the Chronicler. Even when he had forced a way open to the White Isle—a trick he had picked up in his many loops—despite being what was basically a 'Time Dragon', even the Chronicler had no answers for what was going on, either. Spyro closed his eyes, letting out a frustrated sigh.

Then... That was when he had started to become desperate. In one of the loops, he had even asked Malefor himself if he knew what was going on, if he was the one who had cursed him to repeat these events forever. Predictably, though, he wasn't exactly that helpful.

'Well, Spyro... I may *be able to break what you're going through... If you accept your destiny as a purple dragon and destroy the planet."*

Those words still rung out in his mind despite it being several loops back. Like there was any chance he would ever accept *that* offer. Even if Malefor really could break this cycle they were trapped in,

being stuck in a never-ending war was still better than whatever personal hell Malefor would turn their world into.

Spyro gazed back up to the stars. It looked like he was going to have to figure out how to fix this on his own.

'If only Cynder hadn't got caught up in this too...'

That was what terrified him the most, really. Cynder being tortured by having to live through that nightmare, and not being able to do a damn thing to stop it. Spyro rolled onto his side as he closed his eyes. He knew he needed to figure out how to break this endless nightmare before her psyche was permanently shattered, but it only served to frustrate him even more as he had no idea where to even begin.

Cynder... The thought of his loved one caused him extreme worry. He had noticed a new, alarming trend with these loops where Cynder seemed to be completely absent from them. Without her being the Dark Master's commander against her will, new creatures ended up taking her place to keep the loop stable. For the most part, it was usually Gaul himself that ended up becoming 'The King of Terror', as he was referred to in those loops. Needless to say, unlike Cynder, Spyro didn't even bother trying to save him from Convexity when he got to that point.

Why this kept happening, though, really worried him. He hoped they were nothing more than 'variation' loops and *not* the 'extreme' measures he was fearing Cynder would do to escape being the Terror of the Skies each time she woke up in these loops. He had tried asking her about it in one fairly standard loop where she was awake, but predictably she still said nothing like most loops she was awake for.

However, one question she had asked still had Spyro rather confused. For whatever reason, Cynder wanted to see the place he grew up at before he was dragged into the war. Though he had no idea why, he was more than happy to show her if it meant getting her

mind off things for even a little bit. Thankfully, Flash and Nina never really did keep up with the outside world all that much. Even with the massive war going on, they had no idea of the acts Cynder had been forced to perform against her will.

Spyro rolled onto his back again to gaze at the stars. At least the loops were generous enough to give him about a year before the apes would invade his swamp and he'd have to do his quest once again.

It was then Spyro heard a rustling in the nearby bushes. He sighed. Probably another Frogweed. They were easy enough to deal with, but those annoying pests were all over the damn place in the swamp. Spyro sighed, getting to his feet as he got ready to deal with this thing so he could go back to resting. What he saw step out of the bushes, though, nearly caused him to fall backwards in shock.

Her body was badly brushed. She had several cuts and gashes along her form. On her tail was some dried blood-stains, and she was panting from exhaustion. Nonetheless, those same emerald eyes had a spark to them as she looked at him, a smile on her face as a tear started to well up in her eye. Spyro was almost speechless, but managed to say one word.

"C-Cyn—!"

Spyro was stopped mid-word as Cynder ran forward, throwing her forelegs around him in a hug. She had done it. After the countless times she had tried, the countless apes she'd had to fight, having to relive being the Terror of the Skies for yet one last loop, and the countless times she had been so close to escape, only to have it yanked away at the last second...she had finally done it.

Cynder glanced up at Spyro, who was still shocked to see her in front of him. She smiled, resting her head on his chest. Spyro wasn't sure what to say. He wasn't sure if the loops had taken pity on him for a change and decided to offer this variation as a way to help him

get through this. Regardless, Spyro gave a soft smile as he hugged her back.

He wasn't sure how this had happened, but at least for this loop, they would face whatever was thrown at them from the very beginning...together.

Classic Loop 1.9:

Spyro smirked as he ran through the temple that would lead him to his encounter with Ripto. Sparx was glancing back wide-eyed as he gritted his teeth in terror. He had no idea what Spyro was thinking, or even *how* he had managed to pull this off, but all he knew was he was now running for his life.

Spyro laughed. When he had told Hunter of his plan for this loop, though he'd thought it'd be hilarious, the cheetah had decided to sit back from the sidelines to watch. Shame. This run was actually pretty exciting.

As Spyro ran through the dark void and appeared in the arena where he would end up fighting Ripto—he *still* had no idea how that worked—he smirked.

"So, dragon! This is— *hey!* "

Ripto growled as Spyro ran past him without even acknowledging his existence. Watching as the dragon pulled out some sort of mini-UFO from some kind of hammerspace, Ripto growled as Spyro jumped on it and flew off into the air.

"Hey! No fair!"

Ripto watched as Spyro circled around the arena in the aircraft. Though rather annoyed, Ripto would not let him know that. "Oh, I get it! You can't take me on by yourself, so you have to cheat! Well, dragon, *two* can play...at...this...?"

Ripto paused as he felt the ground starting to shake. Raising an eyebrow, he looked back. His mouth promptly dropped as his eyes went wide.

Not a second later, him and his mechanical replica of Gulp were trampled under a massive wave of angry sheep.

Legends loop 1.9:

Spyro watched from the sidelines as the Stone Sentinel brought its fist down in a mighty slam. Spyro had fought this guy many times in the loops he had been in so far, and despite being revered as a god, he was actually one of the easier enemies for Spyro to fight now. Of course, that meant nothing if he wasn't the actual one fighting it.

Cynder flew in the air as she circled around the stone creature. Opening her maw, she let out a high-pitched shriek that caused the Stone Sentinel to freeze for a few seconds.

It had been quite a few loops since Cynder had managed to figure out a way to escape her 'coronation' as the Terror of the Skies. It wasn't *always* perfect, granted. There were a few loops where the apes had managed to pull a fast one on her before she could escape, but she was slowly starting to see the patterns in their attempts to stop her. At the very least, when she finally got to Spyro, she wasn't anywhere near as beat up as she had been on the first loop she had managed to pull it off.

Currently, they were on the 'King of Terror' loop, as they referred to it. Without Cynder, provided she didn't take out any 'percussive therapy' on him, Gaul would usually end up filling her role to keep the loop stable. Maybe it was because Malefor was angry at him letting her escape. He couldn't really be too sure, though.

From then on, for the loops she was awake for, Cynder usually accompanied Spyro on his adventures. The year they'd had before they'd had to leave the swamp had been a really nice addition, too.

Flash and Nina were usually rather accepting of the new dragoness, though they had some questions about where exactly she came from. It took them a couple of loops to come up with a reasonable explanation that didn't alert them of the war going on. They also couldn't be *too* affectionate with each other, less they risk getting 'the talk' from Spyro's parents—a fact Sparx was *never* going to let them live down, much to their annoyance. *Why* did he have to be awake for that loop?—but compared to how things usually went in these loops...it was the closest thing to a break they could get.

Spyro wished he had figured something out to save her sooner, as reliving being the Terror of the Skies six times had obviously taken its toll on her. Even after a few loops like thus, she was only slowly starting to speak again. It wasn't much, just a few short sentences before she would end the conversation...but at least it was a start.

Besides, she had recently surprised him when she'd asked if she could fight this thing for a change. For the most part, she usually just hung back to see what it was like for 'his side of the story', only stepping in when she felt like he was in serious danger. Which, given how many times he'd done all this, wasn't very often. Not that he minded much. Just having her by his side and *not* being forced to watch her commit those acts as the Terror of the Skies against her will was enough for him.

Spyro watched as Cynder disappeared into her shadow, the Sentinel punching the ground where she once was. Confused, the giant stone golem looked around. Not a second later, Cynder jumped out of his shadow and flew up, summoning a mighty gust of wind that sent the golem toppling and breaking into several pieces.

Spyro walked up to her as she landed back on the ground. "Not bad."

Cynder smiled, causing Spyro to smile in return. About now, Kane should be coming to begrudgingly congratulate them. Considering she did most of the work this time around, it was going to be interesting to see how Cynder would react to the offer of being

worshipped as a hero. Spyro had always rejected the offer himself, despite the many loops, as he didn't like the idea of being worshipped in general.

Spyro paused as he glanced at the entrance to the arena. He raised an eyebrow, tilting his head. Noticing that Cynder was looking at him, Spyro shook his head.

"That's odd... Kane should be here by now," Spyro muttered. Looking around, it was only then he realized a certain other member of their time-looping escapades was missing from their group. Frowning, he narrowed his eyes. "Where's Sparx...?"

Spyro looked on with his mouth agape and eyes wide in either shock or horror. Cynder's eyes were wide as well, but other than that she managed to keep her composure a bit better than Spyro.

They were currently in the Atlawa's village. Normally, that would have been no cause for alarm. However, as the Atlawa's bowed up and down before a recently created throne in the middle of the village, it took Spyro several seconds to believe what his eyes were seeing.

"All hail Sparx! All hail Sparx! All hail Sparx!"

Sparx rested his hands behind his head. It had taken him several hundred loops, a lot of careful and clever wordplay, making sure he could do this while his brother and Cynder were too busy to stop him, and a *whole* mess of wires, but in the end it was worth it.

It was *good* to be the deity.

(A/N: I noticed there tends to be a bit of mood whiplash between the classic and legends loops, what with the legends characters approaching this rather realistically and having to find way around the darker parts of the series, while the classic characters are all 'let's mess with everyone we know!'. Don't

worry though, things in the legends part should get a bit less serious once they finally figure out what's going on.

Also, Cynder being transformed a year before the plot to aNB. Honestly, that was just a general guess based off the cut scenes that showed her being relatively close to her age in the series proper when it happened. I forget what game it was in exactly, I want to say tEN when the Chronicler is showing Spyro those books that record a dragons life since birth, but I do know there was a scene in the series at some point that showed Gaul transforming Cynder, and she appeared to be close to her actual age aNB and tEN.

Also, if you could tell, I'm trying to keep these in a 'three legends loops, three classic loops' format. There will be exceptions for when I feel like one loop has gone on for way too long, but generally this is how things are going to go. Anyways, loop titles:

Classic Loops:

1.7: Title match! Gnasty VS Ripto!

1.8: *Totally* not reverse psychology. Nope. Not that at all.

1.9: Me thinks Spyro's been playing too much LoZ.

Legends Loops:

1.7: A dish best served cold.

1.8: "Together"

1.9: All hail Sparx! God of Snark!)

Welcome to the Multiverse

("The character of Jenny Everywhere is available for use by anyone, with only one condition. This paragraph must be included in any publication involving Jenny Everywhere, in order that others may use this property as they wish. All rights reversed." - Steven Wintle, Jenny Everywhere's creator.

Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx.)

Legends Loop 2.0:

Another day, another loop.

Once again he was in the swamp. As had become routine whenever she was awake, Cynder would escape just before she was turned into the Terror of the Skies and make a beeline for their home. She was getting quite good at it at this point. The last few loops, she'd barely had any scratches on her.

In a sense, though Spyro had originally hoped she wouldn't get dragged into this, he was kind of happy she was there with him. These loops had given her a second chance. A chance to live without people seeing her as nothing but the Terror of the Skies. Even though she'd had to relive that horrible experience several times, in the process she had figured out a way to escape her original fate.

"So, Spyro... Today's when the apes invade the swamp, right?"

Spyro glanced over to Cynder, who was walking by his side. Through the past few loops, Cynder had slowly started to become a bit more talkative again. It still wasn't much, but at least she was speaking up without being spoken to first. Though, understandably, she still didn't want to talk about her first few loops.

"Yep. Provided some sort of variation in the loop doesn't take place," Spyro said, looking ahead.

Sparx rested between Spyro's horns, having learned from experience that this was usually the safest place, and the one least likely to get him caught by the apes. "Still say we should mess with them a bit before you take care of them. Considering you can take these guys down now with almost zero effort, I don't see what the big deal is..."

"Sparx, our parents are in danger as long as they're here. We can't afford to take any risk."

Sparx pouted, crossing his arms. Despite being who *knows* how many loops in, outside of having his girlfriend with him from the start, Spyro didn't really approve of almost *any* alterations. The 'King of Darkness' loop was often the loop he preferred the most, since it was the one that was the closest to the main timeline without putting Cynder through all the strife she had originally experienced. It wouldn't have bugged Sparx as much if it wasn't for Spyro's reasoning behind it, though.

'"What if we cause some major alteration for the worse, and the loop decides to break?"' Sparx thought in a mocking voice. *'News flash, bro. If it hasn't broken yet, I doubt it's going to break any time soon.'*

Regardless, Sparx knew there was almost no reasoning with Spyro on the subject, having tried *many* times only to be met with the same response. He sighed as he laid back on his brother's head. *'Spyro, you* really *need to stop being such a stick in the mud...'*

It wasn't long before they made it to the grove where they would encounter the apes. Spyro stretched a bit. Based on past experiences, *especially* with Cynder at his side, this wasn't going to take long at all. As they approached the grove, though, he raised his head.

He could hear the apes screeching already, and the sounds of a struggle going on. From the sound of things, though, it sounded like they were on the losing side of whatever was going on. Both dragons picked up the pace as curiosity consumed them. As they ran down the path where they'd normally encounter the apes, they were met with an odd sight.

There stood an odd bipedal creature wielding a staff. She had a pair of goggles atop her head and short dark hair. She was wearing a scarf around her neck, a green tank top with blue jeans, and a pair of white and blue shoes, which surprisingly weren't all that muddy despite the swampy ground.

Spyro and Cynder looked on in confusion. They had never seen a creature like this before, but whoever she was, she was easily keeping step with the apes. It looked as though they hadn't even managed to land a single blow on her yet.

The being smirked as an ape charged at her, jumping in the air and landing on his head, kicking him into the mud as she collided with a group of them.

Cynder glanced at Spyro, moderately concerned. "We should help her."

Spyro looked at Cynder. He knew she was right, but as he glanced back at the being in the middle of the battle, she didn't look like she was in any danger. In fact, it almost looked like she had a playful smile on her face as the apes got closer.

The being smirked, raising her staff above her head. It appeared to be made of metal, the main pole being silver with a gold trim at each end. She stomped her foot on the ground and a gold incantation circle appeared under her.

"You know what to do, Traveller!"

As if on cue, three slots opened up along the trim of the top end of her staff, and three metal claws shot out to form a perfect circle.

"DETECTING TARGETS... HOSTILE ENTENTIES DETECTED. CHARGING."

The dragons and dragonfly were surprised by the sudden voice. Spyro had heard of rare artifacts that were capable of speech, but the voice that had just spoken sounded so cold and artificial. What exactly *was* this thing?

A glowing orb started to appear between the claws as sparks started to flare around. Sparx floated off Spyro's head and in front of the two dragons, nervously glancing back. "Uh, guys? I'm not sure about you two, but I get the feeling we should hide behind something... Like, *now!* "

Snapping back to reality, Spyro and Cynder quickly realized Sparx might have been onto something. Quickly jumping behind the nearby trees, they had just barely made it in time as the figure smirked.

"Shockwave!"

"DISPENSING PRODUCT!"

As the staff spoke, a magic wave shot out around the figure and slammed into the apes. They tumbled over themselves and dispersed into spirit gems. Spyro and Cynder braced themselves, Spyro having to hold onto Sparx as the wave hit them. Even behind cover, the wave of magic was surprisingly more powerful than they had expected, though they had endured worse on their countless loops.

"Not bad, Traveller," the figure said as the claws atop the staff retracted. Looking around, she wiped the sweat off her forehead as she eyed the spirit gems left behind. "So, creatures explode into crystals in this world when you beat them. Freaky."

Spyro and Cynder poked their heads out from behind the trees. Cynder glanced over to Spyro. "Have you seen this thing before in any of the loops?"

"Not that I can remember. You?"

"Why would I be asking you if I knew?"

The figure raised her eyebrows, having managed to catch Spyro and Cynder's whispers on the wind. Turning around, she managed to catch a glimpse of purple as the two dragons ducked behind the trees again. The figure paused before she smiled. "Yo! You that purple dragon I heard about?"

Spyro and Cynder looked at each other, unsure if they should respond. The figure clearly wasn't with the apes, having fought them a few seconds ago, but they weren't sure exactly *what* she was. In the few variation loops they had encountered, they had never seen a creature like this before, one that could create magic runes like that instantaneously.

The creature sighed, narrowing her eyes as she placed her hand on her head.

"I ain't gonna' hurt ya'. I was hired by some dragon named Ignitus to find 'the purple dragon of legend' in this swamp," she said before she glanced around at her surroundings. "Must say, though, rather odd place for what's basically the dragon version of the Avatar to end up in."

Spyro raised an eyebrow at hearing his mentor's name. He glanced over to Cynder, who seemed just as confused as him. Who was this thing? And what the heck was an 'Avatar'? Finally, with a nod, Spyro poked out from behind the tree, giving the figure a stern glance. "Who are you?"

The figure seemed a bit bothered by Spyro's hostile tone, but regardless managed to keep a straight face. Smiling, she placed her

staff behind her head and rested both arms over it.

"Name's Jenny. Jenny Everywhere," she said, a smile on her face as she tilted her head. "And let me guess...you're this world's Anchor, right?"

Spyro raised an eyebrow as he kept a steady eye on this 'Jenny'. "Anchor...?"

"Yeah, Anchor. The one who's always conscious for the loops."

Spyro reeled back when he heard Jenny mention the loops. It shouldn't have surprised him, considering Sparx and Cynder were occasionally awake for the loops, but how did she know he was awake every time? He looked at Cynder and Sparx, both of whom exchanged confused glances. There were so many questions that had been risen because of this loop, and he wanted answers... Starting with the most obvious question.

"W-what's going on? What *are* you?"

Jenny raised an eyebrow. "What's the matter? This world doesn't normally have humans in it?"

Judging from the blank expression on his face, she figured the answer was 'no.' She had suspected as much, considering the odd look that Ignitus dragon had given her.

"I take it this is your first fused loop, then. Well, then, let me be the first to welcome you all to the Multiverse!"

Spyro, Cynder, and Sparx looked on wide-eyed at the odd device in front of them. It was a small metal disk-like thing that Jenny had thrown down on the ground. It produced a hologram of what appeared to be a tree.

"So, this...Yggdrasil thing. It's what runs 'the Multiverse'?" Spyro asked, still having a hard time grasping the concept of alternate universes.

"More or less," Jenny said, sitting on a log. "Basically, each branch on the tree represents a different universe, with the trunk being the 'hub' universe. The branches could basically be considered different directions the hub universe could have taken."

Jenny looked on with an amused expression as Spyro and Cynder gave each other confused looks. She could have said it was basically a giant super computer, but judging from the aesthetics of this universe, the chances of computers existing here were probably extremely slim.

"And something happened to Yggdrasil, and that's why people keep getting a very bad case of déjà vu?" Sparx asked, scratching his head as he tried to wrap his brain around it.

"Yep. From what the admins said—they're the Gods who make sure everything is running smoothly with the Multiverse—whatever caused it was *quite* the doozy. They're *still* not sure what caused the mess up," Jenny said before she crossed her arms and bit her lip.

"Personally, though, if there's something out there that's so powerful that it can mess up the Multiverse so badly that the Gods have to put all the branches into time-loops to keep it stable while they make repairs, I'd rather not know about it myself."

"Uh, yeah. I'm with goggles on that one," Sparx stated, feeling a chill down his spine at the thought.

Spyro just looked on with a blank expression. This was a lot to take in, but so far it was the best lead they'd had on what was going on so far. He honestly wasn't sure what to think. At least if it had been a curse, they had the chance to break it and live relatively normal lives, but if what Jenny was saying was true, and the Gods themselves were having a hard time fixing things...

Spyro shook his head, pushing the thought of being powerless to the back of his mind. "Anyway, these 'Anchors'..."

"They're what's needed to keep the loops going," Jenny explained, cutting Spyro off. "If it weren't for them, who knows what would happen to their universe."

"And how did you know I was my world's 'Anchor'?"

Jenny tilted her head, a slight smirk on her face. "Oh, I dunno. Anchor needed to stabilize their universe, legendary dragon Avatar... Let's just say I put two and two together," she said in a slightly snarky tone. "Though, granted, nether Aang nor Korra are the anchors of their world, so..."

From what Jenny had explained, 'Avatars' were basically the human equivalent of a purple dragon, able to use the four primary elements from their world. Spyro still found it odd, though, that electricity was basically a sub-element of fire while air was its own element altogether.

"So, exactly how many more times are we going to be stuck in this loop? Because let me tell ya', after the five hundredth time you're awake for it, things get rather repetitive," Sparx said, crossing his arms.

Jenny merely chuckled at the dragonfly's comment, putting her hands behind her head. "Shoot, please. Five hundred loops ain't nothing. Come back to me when you've done around fifty thousand something of 'em, and *then* you can tell me about how repetitive things get."

"Fifty thousand!?" Spyro and Sparx exclaimed in unison, reeling back from the incredible number.

Though Cynder said nothing, her eyes went wide as she let that sink in. Jenny just scratched her cheek as she looked up in response.

"Give or take," she said nonchalantly before looking back down at the group. "Granted, I'm one of the older loopers. Heck, I think Ranma, the first looper, is well past his one millionth loop by now."

The group stood silent with eyes wide. One million... One million loops someone had to go through. How the hell were they suppose to last that many loops!? They'd barely kept it together during all their loops so far!

"Th-that..." Spyro stuttered, his face still frozen in disbelief. He struggled to come up with something to respond with before finally his head dropped as his body went limp.

Jenny watched as Spyro fell to the ground, with Cynder and Sparx quickly going over to his side to comfort him. Jenny blinked. "I take it ya'll are looping during a bad time in your life?"

Sparx glanced over to Jenny, a flat expression on his face. "Lady, you don't even know the *half* of it."

Jenny whistled as Sparx finished explaining how their original timeline went.

"Man, that's quite the troubled tale," she said, her voice rather inappropriately light compared to the rather dark story she had just been told. 'Troubled' was putting it lightly.

"And this one here was possessed for the first good part of it?" Jenny asked, glancing over to Cynder.

Seeing Cynder cringe slightly, Spyro glared at Jenny. "It wasn't her fault!"

"Woah, easy now!" Jenny said, placing her hand in front of her defensively. "I've been through enough loops now to know being brainwashed and crazy ain't fun for no one involved."

Spyro calmed down a bit hearing that Jenny wasn't going to hold that against Cynder, though he did notice that she was looking at Cynder curiously.

"So, I take it by the fact that she's here now and not tearing the world a new one, this is a variation loop?" Jenny narrowed her eyes nervously as Spyro glared at her, only realizing her poor word choice after she had spoken.

"No. Thankfully, Cynder's managed to figure out a way to escape her fate through these loops." If there was one thing Spyro was grateful for because of this mess, it was that.

Jenny smiled, placing her hands on her hips.

"Well, good for you!" she said enthusiastically. "It's always nice to hear of good people escaping bad fates because of these loops. About the only really good thing to come from these loops, really."

There was a pause, as neither side said anything. Finally, Jenny gave a sly smile as she narrowed her eyes. "So, what kind of crazy shenanigans have ya'll been up to during these loops?"

Spyro and Cynder glanced at each other over the question, though Sparx was quick to voice his complaints. "Not much, thanks to my brother here! Other than having his girlfriend along for the ride, he seems dead set on putting himself through hell time and time again!"

"Sparx!"

Jenny scratched her head. "Wait, you mean to tell me you've mostly been following the same pattern for the past hundreds of loops?"

Spyro glanced at Jenny, a confused look on his face. "Well...yeah. I mean, what if the loop breaks?"

Jenny narrowed her eyes before she tilted her head. "Hoo boy. Sounds like you have a bad case of Setsuna syndrome there."

"Setsuna syndrome?"

Jenny shook her head before she reached up into the air and her hand disappeared through a small wormhole that opened up. Seeing the group's confused and amazed reactions as she pulled out a piece of paper from it, she chuckled.

"Don't worry, I'll teach ya'll about pocket space soon enough," she said with a smile before she looked down at the paper.

"Anyway, ahem, Setsuna Syndrome: 'A thankfully rare state of mind where the individual is convinced that a specific sequence of events will 'cure' what is wrong with the universe and makes efforts to railroad those events into place. Effectively the opposite of Sakura Syndrome in a sense, and a mindset loopers tend to abandon once informed about the nature of the loops by their local admin or another more experienced looper. As such, this condition is generally attributed to local Loop Aware entities with 'preservation of the timeline' on their agenda and a hefty dislike for the derailing shenanigans that loopers often get up to. Named for Setsuna Meiou, aka Sailor Pluto, from the 'Sailor Moon' universe, who is one of the earliest recurring examples of this mindset.'"

The group was silent at Jenny's lengthy explanation. Finally, crossing his arms, Sparx said what they were all thinking. "In English, please."

Jenny sighed, placing her hand on her head. "Basically, the way ya'll did things the first time isn't always the best way. I mean, Cyndy here managing to escape her fate is already infinitely better than her ending up brainwashed and crazy, right?"

"Of course!" Spyro said, jumping up with a stern look.

"Then calm down a little, then. I'm sure the admins will warn everyone before they hit the play button on the Multiverse again. Ya'll don't have to do the same darn thing *every* loop!" Jenny said with a smile. "Frankly, I'm surprised ya'll managed to last this long without going stir crazy from monotony."

"See! I told you!" Sparx said, floating in front of Spyro and pointing his finger at him. "I told you we didn't have to do the same thing every loop!" Sparx grinned before he flew into the air. "Oooh, I have so many things I've wanted to do! Let's see how much of a chatter box 'ol Volteer is when I slip some spider-webbing into his food..."

"Woah, hold up there, bug boy!" Jenny said, sitting up and narrowing her eyes at him. "Prankin's all fine and dandy there, but make sure ya'll don't go developing Sakura Syndrome there!"

"'Sakura Syndrome'? The heck's that?" Sparx said, turning around and looking down at Jenny.

Jenny sighed. Reaching into her pocket space, she pulled out another paper.

"Ahem. Sakura Syndrome: 'A rare state of mind where a looper is convinced that none of their actions will have any consequences past the current loop, including interactions with other loopers, combined with a general disregard for restrictions or laws, of morality or otherwise. This can lead to traumatic experiences for those interacting with them, especially the loopers who have to remember it. Named for Sakura Haruno from the 'Naruto' universe, who is the biggest example of this state of mind.'"

Once again, the group went silent. Sparx pointed his finger at Jenny. "Let me get this straight... Do you just carry around papers explaining every little obscure disorder or something?"

Jenny frowned, placing a hand on her head.

"Let's just say that, due to my rather *unique* situation as a looper, I tend to visit a lot of worlds who are still new to this," she said in a slightly sheepish tone.

"Anyway, what I'm basically saying is, a few pranks are fine every now and then to help keep ya'll sane, but don't overdo it. You do *not* want to end up like Sakura," she said, crossing her arms and

shivering slightly. "I've met her a few times in my travels, and let me tell you, that girl's become nuttier than all the nuts on Yggdrasil combined!"

Another silence followed as the group looked amongst themselves, though Sparx crossed his arms again. "So... What exactly are we supposed to do, then?"

Jenny paused before she looked up at the sky. "Well, the way I see it... So long as no one's in any serious danger or harm, a few pranks to break things up isn't bad. Just don't cause a Borg outbreak like I heard Sakura did that one loop, and ya'll should be fine."

Jenny smiled as she looked back down at the group. The confused looks on their faces made her sure she wouldn't have to worry about them doing such a thing. She got up and stretched, picking up her staff.

"Anyways, considering you've been fightin' this Malefor guy for so many loops, why don't ya'll take a break? I'll go tell Ignitus that, sadly, there are no dragons here," she said, putting her staff behind her neck and resting her arms on it.

"B-but, what about the war? The world breaking apart?" Spyro asked, getting up defiantly.

"Just leave that to me," Jenny said, giving a confident wink. "Me and this here Intelligent Device have been through a fair share of apocalyptic wars through these loops." Jenny smirked, twirling the device before stamping it into the ground. "By the way, if you encounter Nanoha in any loop, you should totally pick one of these bad boys up. She always has a few spares on her for anyone who wants one, and I heard they've actually fitted a few specifically for dragons after they met Toothless."

Spyro shook his head. He had no idea what these 'Intelligent Devices' were, or who this Toothless dragon was. All he was focused on was how willing Jenny seemed to be to go off into war, a fact

Spyro had only accepted because he'd heard how desperate things were, and he was the only one who could possibly turn the tides.

"A-are you sure? I mean, I saw you take down those apes, bu—"

"No buts," Jenny said, giving the dragon a stern glare. "It'll be a new experience for me considering this is my first time in this loop, which, *trust me* , is a *very* rare thing these days. Besides, I'm actually *much* stronger than I look," she said, holding up her left arm, which had three bracelets on it.

"Um...nice bling?" Sparx asked, rubbing his head.

Jenny smirked. "They're power limiters, bug boy. Trust me, after enough loops, you're going to want a pair of these soon enough to make battles *actually challenging* again."

"When I take these puppies off, I can give a non-loopin' Frieza a run for his money. Who, in case you didn't know, destroys planets as a *hobby* ," she said with a rather smug smile, though it quickly disappeared. "Though, I still can't hold a candle to Nanoha. Girl has ten of these darn things on each arm, and *still* causes loop crashes with that 'Starlight Breaker' of hers..."

Spyro looked at Cynder, who had a rather curious look on her face. Spyro paused before he looked at Sparx, who was practically *begging* with the expression on his face. Spyro hesitated before he looked at Jenny. "I-I guess if you don't mind."

Jenny snapped her fingers, a wide grin on her face. "Ain't no trouble at all! Just leave everything to Everywhere!"

With that, Jenny darted off out of the swamp. Spyro sat down. This loop had been rather... *interesting* so far. They finally knew what was going on, at least. Spyro still wasn't sure what to think about this mess, and now other universes were getting involved. Or rather, *they* were getting involved with other universes.

Spyro shook his head. This was all so confusing...

Looking over to Cynder, he saw a slight smile on her face and smiled in return. Sparx had already darted off back home, practically doing loop-the-loops as he flew.

Now that he thought about it, a vacation from the war *did* sound pretty good right about now.

Classic Loop 2.0:

Some loops were weirder than others.

Spyro already had a good idea of the fact that there were other universes out there, and that occasionally loops would fuse together for whatever reason...

But seeing his best friend as a miniature Pegasus was still weird.

Sparx smirked, still glancing over his yellow-furred body. His mane and tail were short and a silver-ish grey, with two tuffs of his mane at the front sticking straight up like his antennas used to. Sparx glanced over to Spyro. "I don't know about you, but so far I'm liking this loop."

"Easy for you to say. You weren't turned into a baby."

Spyro frowned, barely coming up to Sparx's knees as he walked on all fours. At least he could somehow still talk, but being a baby once was already enough for him. The fact that his appearance had got him tackle-hugged by a pegasus earlier that day hadn't helped, either. He was supposed to be one of the Dragon Realm's greatest heroes! A totally awesome dragon all around! *He was not supposed to be cute!*

Spyro sighed as he looked around the library that was in this hollowed-out tree. There were more multicolored miniature horses everywhere. For whatever reason, a pink one that somehow seemed

to be even *more* hyper than Agent 9 on a sugar rush had insisted on giving them a 'Welcome to our loop!' party. Spyro shook his head. He didn't mind parties, but considering only three people—sorry, *ponies* — were aware they were looping, he didn't see much of a point, as it only served to confuse most of the non-looping ponies who were there.

"So, how ya'll likin' our loop so far?"

Spyro and Sparx turned around to see Applejack, a brownish-yellow pony with straw-yellow hair in a cowboy hat, standing there.

"Pretty good so far. Took a bit of getting used to with this new body, but I love the fact that other people besides Spyro can understand what I'm saying for a change," Sparx said with a big grin, sitting down.

Spyro still had a flat expression on his face. "Other than being de-aged to a baby, I guess it's been alright so far."

AJ chuckled, giving a wink. "Sorry 'bout that. I'd get RD to age ya'll up, but any dragons older than ah baby tend to cause quite the panic in Ponyville."

Spyro narrowed his eyes before he glanced at the rainbow-maned pegasus in the background. Rainbow Dash had been the first one to welcome Sparx and him to their loop and explain what was going on. Apparently, Sparx had replaced Twilight, this world's Anchor, as the number one student of this world's ruler, 'Princess Celestia', and Spyro had replaced Twilight's assistant, Spike, who was also a baby dragon.

Also, apparently, when awake in one of their loops, most of Twi's friends had long since learned how to become 'alicorns'—which apparently were the demigods of this world in that they had the abilities of all major pony species, as well as massive reserves of magic. Rainbow Dash had accidentally triggered her transformation while she was racing to where they had 'looped in' to make sure they

didn't do anything stupid, and was now using an invisibility spell to hide the newly-acquired horn on her head.

She had also told them about what was going to happen today. Apparently, some not-quite-evil but rather misunderstood alicorn named 'Nightmare Moon' would appear later today to try to plunge the world into an eternal night. Spyro shook his head. If it wasn't for the fact that he was a baby at the moment, he'd torch her butt the second she'd appear.

"So, what do you want us to do about this 'Luna' girl?" Sparx asked, glancing over to Applejack.

AJ placed her hoof to her chin. "Well, we've all come up with several different ways 'ah dealin' with her when she ain't loopin', but considerin' ya'll are new here, do you two have any particular ideas?"

Spyro and Sparx glanced at each other before a devious grin appeared on Spyro's face. He looked back at Applejack. "I think I have an idea."

Nightmare Moon yelled in rage at the top of her lungs, but no one in the room could hear her. Thanks to a combination of skills learned from that one loop where Spyro had decided to challenge himself, and a bit of reinforcement from RD's new magical ability, the Mare in the Moon who had attempted to plunge the world into eternal night...was currently trapped in a giant bubble.

Spyro smirked. True, he probably could have come up with something better given time, but considering he was still new to this world, he decided to go with something simple.

Rainbow Dash was laughing her butt off, while AJ was trying her best to suppress a chuckle. "Trappin' her in ah bubble. I have ta' admit, it's ah bit simple, but we hadn't thought ah that yet."

Spyro snorted out a laugh. It seemed like this loop would be a rather fun one.

Though, he still wished he wasn't a baby for it.

(And then I lose what little followers I have of the fic because ponies. Or maybe I'll gain a few new ones. Hard to tell anymore, really. /shot

And now we get into the multiversial shenanigans. Yeah, wanted to wait until the characters got properly introduced to the concept before I started making it a thing, though it ended up restricting me a little this chapter with only two loops because the Legends part went on for a bit longer than intended, and I'm trying to keep these short. Keep in mind, unlike most fics in the Infinite Loops setting, I'm going to try to keep the cross-over shenanigans to a min. I have a few ideas, but it won't be an every chapter thing like most Infinite Loop fics.

Loop titles:

Legend Loop 2.0: 'Jenny Exposition'

Classic Loop 2.0: 'Bubble Mare')

Fused Loop Shenanigans

(Chapters beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments at the end.)

Legends Loop 2.1:

Spyro walked along the frozen plains of Dante's Freezer. It had been several loops now since he had encountered Jenny and learned exactly why these loops were happening, as well as a few other tricks Jenny had taught him that apparently all Anchors in their loops possessed. She had even offered to teach them a few tricks and abilities from different worlds she had visited, but for now he declined.

Spyro still wasn't sure what to make of all this. What made it the most irritating was, from what he understood, it was completely out of his control to do anything about it. Even when he had asked Jenny if there was any way to help speed up the repair of Yggdrasil, all she said was that most attempts to do so usually just ended up temporarily 'crashing' the loop and thus, for the meantime, he would have to be placed in another's world until 'the admins' repaired whatever damage he may have accidentally done to his world.

'Just calm down, will ya? It'll fix itself when it fixes itself. For now, why not figure out what to do with your infinite resets?'

Jenny's words still rang in his head. She seemed so light and nonchalant, despite experiencing the problems caused by the war in their world firsthand. Even though Jenny had told him she had been to several worlds whose loops were experiencing wars as well—and the people caught in it still managed to make the best of the situation—it still seemed a bit inconsiderate.

"Gah... Spyro, why are we still going along with this? You heard goggles a few loops back."

Spyro glanced at Sparx, not saying anything as he looked ahead. That was another problem he had run into about this. Other than going along with what he knew... He really wasn't sure what else he could, or really wanted, to do.

Except for one thing, though.

"You'll see, Sparx. I have something I want to try out."

Spyro hid in one of the ruined forts, having already handily dealt with most of the apes and specters in the area. Now having some time to concentrate, he closed his eyes and began to focus.

One of the first things Jenny had taught him about being a looper was that each one got their own personal 'Subspace Pocket'. Basically, it was a mini-dimension attached to the world's loopers that allowed them to carry things over from one loop to the next. It was by far one of the most basic abilities a looper could possess, and one that would grow considerably over time.

Spyro barely had enough space in it at the moment to store what he wanted to carry over to this loop, but Jenny had told him that Ranma, the first looper, had managed to expand the space in his so much that he now personally collected 'Death Stars', which were apparently the size of one of the celestial moons.

Spyro wasn't sure if he believed such a thing to be possible, but he did have to admit that Pocket Space was a very useful ability to have. For now, he didn't have too many things he wanted to take back with him each loop, but he could see it coming in handy for the future.

As a mini wormhole opened up next to him, he reached in and pulled out a set of black armor with a golden trim to it. Sparx looked at it, and smirked.

"What? You want to make things even *more* easy on yourself?" Sparx asked sarcastically, crossing his arms. "Hate to break it to you, bro, but you're already taking out a lot of the enemies we face in one hit."

Spyro shook his head. "That's not it, Sparx."

Spyro really wasn't sure what this armor was, or who had made it. All he knew was that, throughout his adventures and the multiple loops he had been in, he had come across a multitude of armor each with their own unique and special abilities. However, none of them possessed as much raw power as the 'Fury armor', as he and the others had taken to calling it. Maybe it was an ancient relic from times gone by. Who knew? All he really knew about it was that, when he put it on, he felt his power increase tenfold.

More importantly, though, it also gave him access to the Convexity element.

Despite the multiple loops he had made—and getting better with the four basic elements out of sheer repetition—it had never really crossed Spyro's mind to try to master the Convexity element. To be honest, he still had no idea what Convexity actually *was,* or even where to begin when it came to learning how to use it. All he knew was that it seemed to come from sheer desperation, as it seemed he was only able access it when things were most desperate.

Now that he had more or less all the time in the world, though, one of the few things he could think of was trying to master all four basic elements, and eventually unconventional elements like Convexity as well. However, there was a specific reason he wanted to master that 'element' before anything else, and he didn't want to wait several hundred loops to test if what he had planned for it would actually work. For now, he was going to take a shortcut.

Placing the helmet on last, Spyro gave a confident grin. It was quickly wiped off his face, though, when the helmet promptly fell over his eyes. Hearing Sparx chuckling at the sight, Spyro raised the

helmet up and gave him an annoyed glare. Since he was three years younger than he had been when he'd first found this armor, it was rather loose-fitting. Hopefully, though, that wouldn't mess with its power too much.

Suddenly, the armor started to glow. Spyro's eyes went wide as it started to shrink to a more fitting size.

"Well, that's new. Never knew it did that," he said, glancing over the now-fitting armor.

Not a second later, a faint purple aura surrounded him as he felt his power start to increase considerably.

Sparx paused and scratched his chin. "Wait a second, Spyro. Doesn't that armor drain you of your energy like a dry sponge in water?"

Spyro smirked. That was the main drawback to this armor. For the great power came a great drain to his mana. However, if things went according to plan, he was only going to need one Convexity beam.

Spyro and Sparx heard a shriek in the air. Before Sparx could say anything, Spyro shot out from the fort they were in and took to the air. Sparx had to steady himself from the resulting wind, but once he did, he looked out the window with a sly smile.

"Oh, *I* get what you're up to..."

Spyro had sped things along this loop, though not to the same extreme as he had with the one earlier. Just a few extra minutes to give him time to put the fury armor on before Cynder showed up.

The Terror of the Skies flew not far above him now. It hadn't taken long for Spyro to figure out that, if Cynder didn't show up at his swamp early on in the loop, there was a good chance she wasn't awake for that loop. Ever since, Spyro had always tried to find a way to lessen Cynder's time in that accursed form. Finally, after spending

several loops running himself ragged, he may have found a way that was easy on both of them.

Spyro darted in front of 'Adult' Cynder, as they had taken to calling that form. His sudden appearance caused her to fumble to a stop, but once she regained her composure, she let out an evil chuckle.

"Well, well, well. So you're the purple dragon I've been hearing about," she said, narrowing her eyes as a sadistic smirk appeared on her face.

Spyro said nothing as he kept a firm gaze. *'I hope this works...'*

"I hear you've managed to handle our troops with ease. You must be pretty confident then, coming to face me of your own will," she said, keeping her gaze on Spyro. "No matter. Those idiots were always an incompetent lot. I'll make short work of you here and now!"

This was it. As Cynder reeled her head back to let loose a siren scream, Spyro glowed bright purple as he opened his maw. A massive purple beam of energy shot out, completely engulfing Cynder as she let out a shriek and was sent flying.

As Spyro ended the attack, his eyes drooped as he struggled to stay in the air. Placing a paw on his head to steady himself, he quickly shook it. He may have accidentally put more power behind that blast than he had intended.

Quickly snapping back to reality, he looked down to see Cynder falling to the ground, dark smoke trailing off her form as she began to revert back to her real size. Not wasting a second, Spyro darted down after her and grabbed her in midair as the last of the darkness washed from her scales.

Gliding to the ground, Spyro laid Cynder on the snow gently. Barely conscious, she managed to weakly glance at Spyro. "Thank...you..."

With that, Cynder closed her eyes. Placing a paw on her to make sure he hadn't hurt her, Spyro smiled once he saw that she was just resting. He would have preferred to find a way to prevent Cynder from ever experiencing that in the first place when she wasn't looping, but for now, at least he could lessen the time she spent trapped in that nightmare.

Classic Loop 2.1:

It was nice to be back in his world. Equestria was alright, and even though he had finally convinced RD to age him up back to his proper age during that loop, it still had nothing on the Dragon Realms.

Sparx sighed. *"I miss having everyone understand me."*

Spyro chuckled. He couldn't really think of anything to do for this loop, so for now he and Sparx were walking through the Peace Keepers realm, rescuing dragons from stone just like the good old days.

"Well, you can always use these loops to learn how to get over your dragonfly tongue."

Sparx rolled his eyes. *"I guess. I tried a few times before the loops started, but it was a* massive *pain in the butt."*

Spyro snorted, rolling his eyes as they walked up to a nearby portal. "Well, I don't have anything particular planned for this loop. You have any ideas?"

Sparx paused as he placed his hand on his chin. *"Oh, I know! Why not try that thing that lady taught you?"*

Spyro paused. During his time in Equestria, the ponies had actually been rather surprised to find the massive amounts of magic reserves he had due to his scale-color. From what he had gathered, dragons of their world were actually supposed to outright resist magic. AJ had

told him he should be glad that Twilight currently wasn't in the loop. Apparently, if she had been there, she wouldn't have let him out of her sight, wanting him to learn multiple spells so she could study how dragon magic worked. Spyro shuddered at the thought of being forced to spend an entire loop doing nothing but studying.

Needless to say, though, for any spells he was actually interested in learning, they were more than willing to teach him a thing or two about how to properly use magic. For the lessons he had managed to stay awake for, he had learned a few spells that could make these loops rather interesting. A big one he had learned was how to access the dreamscape.

Getting Luna to teach him that had been a rather tricky business, considering she hadn't been looping at the time. Thankfully, being the assistant to Celestia's 'number one-student' for that loop had helped. Once she had found out that he could even access the dreamscape to begin with, she had actually been interested to see the extent of what he could pull off. Though, he'd had to promise her *not* to mess around with people's dreams in order for her to consider it.

Of course, he'd had his claws crossed behind his back at the time, but really. Would it matter considering that eventually she wouldn't even remember teaching him in the first place?

Spyro had yet to explore the full extent of these powers, but he had noticed a rather nice quirk to it. He had already discovered that loopers felt *different* when he saw them in the dreamscape. With practice, he could use this ability to tell if someone was looping. Would come in handy, especially when it came to plans for pranks to pull in the current loop.

"Alright then. Be nice to know if Hunter's awake for this loop. Might give me some ideas on what to do," Spyro said as he sat down on the ground. "Now then... Let's see if I actually remember how to do this."

Spyro closed his eyes and focused, channelling his magic as he became engulfed in a soft purple glow. Letting his mind float throughout the Dragon Realms, he looked for anything that felt different than usual.

'Hmm... Darn, doesn't look like Hunter's awake for this loop. Ah well. I'm sure I'll come up with something...eventual...'

Though his eyes were closed, Spyro's expression became increasingly confused.

'Wait, that can't be... Oh, horse apples!'

Spyro shook his head. He had hoped that Equestria's speech expressions wouldn't have rubbed off on him while he was there, but he had a much greater reason to worry. He looked over to Sparx, who an amused look on his face. *"What's the matter, Spyro?"*

Spyro growled and sighed. "Let's just say I owe you five hundred gems now."

"Aha! Told ya!" Sparx said, pointing his finger at Spyro. *"Told you she was looping!"*

Spyro frowned, narrowing his eyes. He didn't know what annoyed him more. The fact that he now knew for sure Ember was in the loop, or the fact that he'd lost a bet to Sparx.

Sparx grinned. *"So, Spyro, want to let your number one fangirl know what the heck is going on?"*

Spyro shook his head. "If it's all the same to you, Sparx, I think I'm going to skip out on taking down Red this loop."

Sparx laughed, rolling his eyes. Spyro scowled. It wasn't like it was his job to inform everyone who was awake that they were in a time loop. If Ember came to the Dragon Realms to ask him about it, then

maybe he would let that fact slip. For now, though, he would let Hunter have that honor the next time he was awake.

"Anyways, Spyro... Now what? Want to continue with the base timeline, or do you have something crazy you want to pull?"

Spyro paused, placing a claw to his chin. "Um... How about doing this realm on your own? Would probably be more of challenge then those small bug colonies you beat up almost every loop."

"Hey, don't knock it 'til you've tried it. Those robot bugs of the Sorceress' can be real butts sometimes!"

Spyro chuckled. Despite the comment, Sparx was still interested in the challenge. He gave a wink before flying through the portal. Spyro smirked and lay down as he waited for Sparx to get back. After a few seconds, though, Spyro quickly looked around. Seeing that no one was watching him, he reached into his pocket space and pulled out a red gem. After looking at for a few seconds, he shrugged and attempted to bite into it.

CLANG!

Tears welled up in Spyro's eyes. His teeth hadn't even put a scratch on the gem. Slowly pulling it out of his mouth, it took him a few seconds before he was able to close his jaw.

"Oooooow!" Spyro muttered, glaring at the gem. Exactly how Equestrian dragons apparently ate these things, he would never know.

Legends Loop 2.2:

This had been interesting loop, to say the least. They had been in a few 'fused' loops since the first time with Jenny, but for the most part it had been other people coming into their universe. This was the first time they had ended up in someone else's world.

"Well, I don't know about you, but I'm liking this so far," Sparx said, looking over his new body.

Normally a dragonfly, Sparx was now a human thanks to this loop. He had short, messy blond hair with two tuffs sticking up in front. He was wearing traditional Viking attire, though he was rather scrawny compared to the Vikings of Berk. He didn't mind too much, though, as this body was still stronger than that of a dragonfly.

Spyro shook his head. He would have voiced his opinions about the world so far...if he had actually been able speak in this loop.

"Yep, really like this universe so far," Sparx said with a smirk.

Spyro growled as Sparx chuckled. Hopefully this loop wouldn't last too long.

"So, Amazon, what's the deal with this world?"

Astrid scowled, punching Sparx in the shoulder. As he let out an 'ow', Astrid shook her head. He had only been there for about an hour this loop, and already he was starting to get on her nerves. This guy may look like Hiccup, but he sounded a *lot* more like Snotlout. She could only hope that, wherever Hiccup and Toothless were, they were having a better time than she was.

"First off, call me another one of your 'witty' names again and I'll do a *lot* worse than a punch," she said, narrowing her eyes. "Secondly, usually Hiccup tames the dragons around our village, and depending on who's awake for the loop, we pretty much do whatever."

Astrid crossed her arms and a smirk appeared on her face. "Considering you look about as intelligent when it comes to taming dragons as Tuffnut and Ruffnut combined, you might want to leave the dragon taming to me."

Sparx frowned, crossing his arms and narrowing his eyes. "Hey, hold up now! I'll have you know I've lived around dragons for pretty much

all my life. If anyone's the most suited for dealing with 'em, it'd be me." Sparx pointed to himself confidently as a smug look appeared on his face.

Astrid scoffed. "Oh really? Than how come your dragon doesn't seem all that happy to be with you?"

Sparx shook his head, putting his arm around the back of Spyro's neck. "Ah, old Spyro here's just at that age where his species gets all moody and that."

Spyro narrowed his eyes at Sparx.

"Don't let that fool you, though. Spyro and I are practically brothers." *Technically* , that was true.

Astrid smirked as she raised an eyebrow. "Oh, really?"

"Yeah, really!" Sparx said, before he got up and walked over to Astrid. "Heck, I bet you, by sun down, I'll have all the dragons on this island tamed and peaceful or my name ain't Sparx!" He poked a finger at Astrid's shoulder.

"Then prove it, twinkle!" Astrid said, giving him a shove that caused him to fall back onto his rear.

Frowning, Sparx got up and walked over to Spyro. "Come on, Spyro! We have a bet to win!"

Spyro shook his head. He wasn't sure why, but he had a *very* bad feeling about this...

Spyro and Astrid looked on in horror, mouths agape as multiple dragons flew around the burning fireball that was once Berk. Astrid had seen a few loopers who had replaced Hiccup for a loop try to tame a dragon, but never before had someone managed to fail on

such a massive scale that it caused *almost every single dragon on Berk* to attack the village at the same time.

"U-uh, don't worry! Everything's under control!" Sparx called before he was promptly rammed in the back by a Deadly Nadder and sent flying into a building.

Spyro face-palmed. Thank the ancestors things would go back to normal after this loop ended.

'Note to self: never let Sparx around dragons from any other universe ***ever*** *.'*

Classic Loop 2.2:

Ember sighed as she laid in her bed. This was around the one hundredth or so loop she had personally been through. She had thought about going to Spyro to ask what was going on, but so far she had never managed to find him in any of the loops. This was starting to worry her greatly. Either Spyro was looping and something had happened to him, or she was in one of these variation loops like that time she had replaced Spyro on his first three adventures.

Ember shook her head, getting out of bed. As her necklace glowed, a long shower curtain rod she had stored from a previous loop appeared out of it. She used it to push open her door, causing a bucket of water to fall down onto the floor. Flame charged in with a smirk, but it quickly disappeared.

"Oh, come on!" he exclaimed in annoyance. "I swear, one of these days I'm going to get you again!"

Ember chuckled as Flame stomped away, putting the curtain rod back into her pocket space. If there was one good thing about these loops, it allowed her to become wise to any and all pranks her brother could pull on her.

She walked out of her home, telling her mother she'd be back before sundown.

Ember looked around Dragon Village. The villagers were doing pretty much the same thing they did every loop, provided something didn't come up to vary things up for a change. It unnerved her a bit to see these dragons do the same thing over and over. To be honest, she had no idea how she had managed to keep her sanity over these many loops.

She had thought about using these loops to mess with people, if only to give her something to do, but... She shook her head. Even if things would reset once the loop was over, it just wasn't in her nature to be mean like that.

Sighing, she made her way to the nursery. As she walked in, she rolled her eyes and stopped.

'Three, two, one...'

Ember held her paw out, catching a baby dragon as he attempted to 'fly' off the doorframe. She glanced down at the giggling hatchling.

"Tammy, what did I tell you about trying to fly off stuff?" Ember said in a firm tone.

"Sorry, Emby. I just really want to fly."

Ember chuckled before heading back into the nursery. Another good thing about these loops was that Ember had become wise to a lot of the antics of the baby dragons at the nursery.

Looking ahead, she saw Mrs. Shoutfire dealing with a group of baby dragons. Ember smiled as Shoutfire looked back, a look of relief on her face.

"Tammy! There you are!"

Ember sat the baby dragon down and he playfully hopped over to his nanny. Ember smiled as she sat down, keeping an eye on the baby dragons for any signs one of them was up to their usual antics.

As the day went on and Ember made sure the baby dragons didn't put themselves in harm's way, she began to think to herself about what she could do with her free time now. She could look for Spyro, if only to put her fears to rest, but Dragon Village wouldn't set up a portal to the Artisan Realm until Red started acting up.

She could possibly try to train herself to be better at combat. She had only barely scraped through that one loop where she was put into Spyro's shoes, and she couldn't even imagine what it would have been like had the loop not ended early and she'd had to fight Red and the Sorcerer. The main problem with that, though, was the Dragon Sensei was very picky about who he would train, so it would likely take her many loops to even *begin* to convince him to take on a weakling like her as a student.

Ember shook her head as she saw a baby dragon, Katy, sneak away from the group. Knowing her, she was likely going to attempt to practice her fire breathing abilities. Not feeling like having a good part of the nursery burn down again, Ember got up and quickly followed after her.

Ember continued to think to herself as she walked. It was then an idea hit her; why she should she only use these loops to solve problems at the nursery? If she was going to be reliving these years for a while now, then why couldn't she use this time to solve a lot of the problems that plagued the village?

A smile appeared on her face. That was actually a pretty good idea. Even if these loops reset everything she did, for now, she at least had something to do. She was going to use this time to make Dragon Village the most peaceful village in the Dragon Realms.

For now, though, she had a greater part of the nursery to keep from burning down.

Legends Loop 2.3:

Once again, much to Sparx's annoyance, Spyro had found that he had fallen into a routine each loop.

If Cynder wasn't awake in a loop, he would follow the baseline events of his original timeline up until the earliest point he knew he would encounter Cynder, and use the Fury armor to break the curse on her early. If she was awake, besides her coming to the Swamp to join his side of the story, they would pretty much follow the base timeline with Gaul taking her place. Pretty much the only differences were Sparx's antics becoming more frequent, and Spyro spending more time devoted to training his abilities.

Spyro took deep breaths as he stood in front of a training dummy. He had to practice using the Convexity element at a time he knew none of the guardians would walk in on him, as him practicing this element seemed to bother them greatly. It kind of hurt having his mentors worried that he might end up like Malefor because of that element being his personal favorite, but he was mostly willing to forgive them. The only times he could train were early on in the loops when they had yet to really get to know him, so they really didn't know better.

As he focused, a faint purple aura surrounded him. He could feel it, the raw power of Convexity. The problem was trying to use it, to focus it into an attack. Spyro opened his mouth, trying to will it out like the other elements, but all that came out was an exhaling breath.

Spyro growled, letting his head down as he took several deep breaths. This would be easier if he had a Convexity guardian to teach him, but he would be damned if he would go to that dragon for anything. Sighing, Spyro shook his head before he began to concentrate again.

"Spyro?"

Spyro nearly jumped out of his scales when he heard someone speak up. Looking back, he saw Cynder standing next to the doorframe with a shy expression on her face. Spyro was rather surprised. Cynder wasn't awake for this loop, so she shouldn't have been here at the training room at this hour. Nonetheless, Spyro quickly softened his expression.

"What is it, Cynder?"

Cynder looked down, unable to make eye contact. Spyro frowned. Even though he did everything he could to make it apparent he didn't hold anything against her while she was the Terror of the Skies in the loops she wasn't awake, it still took her a good long while before she felt comfortable enough to be around him on equal terms.

Cynder looked away, though she did managed to glance at Spyro out of the corner of her eye. "I... I wanted to...to thank you again for saving me."

Spyro smiled, walking over to Cynder carefully so he didn't intimidate her. "It was no problem. When I found out you were a young dragoness under a spell, saving you from it was the first thing I had on my mind." Technically, that was the truth.

Cynder smiled, though she still had trouble making eye contact with him. Admittedly, that line had sounded a bit corny now that Spyro thought about it, but it didn't really seem to bother Cynder. They were silent for a moment until he spoke up again.

"Cynder, you do realize that none of that was your fault? You were kidnapped as an egg before you could even fight back, and you did none of that of your own will. The only one to blame here is the Dark Master."

Cynder's eyes drooped, and she looked away with a sigh. "I know, but... My body still committed all those horrible acts, and even though I was aware of it, I couldn't do anything to stop it. I was too

weak. I have to take some responsibility for those actions because of it..."

Spyro frowned. He really wished that, throughout all the loops he'd gone through, there was some sort of possible conversation they could have that would finally convince her she wasn't evil early on. If only there was a way he could outright prevent her from becoming that when she wasn't awake.

It was then did a thought occurred to Spyro.

"Uh, Cynder?" he asked, trying to think of the correct way to word this. He probably should have waited until Cynder was awake to ask this, but if there was a chance he could learn this sooner, he would take it. "I know this may be a hard question for you to answer, but I don't suppose you know the place you were cursed at?"

Cynder froze up for a second, the idea of having to remember those horrid memories not a comforting thought. "W-why do you ask?"

Spyro shook his head before he gave a sympathetic frown. "Well, if they're using that place to do stuff like that to dragons, it might be worth checking out so we can hopefully stop that for good."

Cynder paused before she looked down and closed her eyes.

"W-well... I was only there a few times. Once when I was... Well, you know," Cynder said, barely opening her eyes as she flinched at the memory. "And I only went back there occasionally in order to get orders from the ape king, Gaul. I don't fully remember what the place was like, though. All I know was that it was in a giant mountain."

'Likely the Well of Souls,' Spyro thought, cringing a bit.

Thanks to his many repeat adventures, he had a general idea of how to get there. However, it was still a long way from the Dragon Temple even if he cut out the antics with the sky pirates and the Chronicler. On top of that, Cynder had mentioned once while she was awake

that she usually didn't have much time when a loop started before she was turned into the Terror of the Skies. Even if Spyro booked it as fast as his wings would carry him, he likely still wouldn't make it in time.

"Spyro?"

Spyro snapped back to reality as he realized that Cynder was still in front of him, giving him an odd look. "Spyro, you're not thinking of going there now, are you?"

Spyro shook his head. "No, not yet. I still have to rescue the other guardians, after all."

Cynder gave him a concerned look. It was one of the rare instances she had been able to make eye contact with him during an early part of the loop. "Spyro, listen to me. I may not fully remember what that place was like, but I do know that it's one of the Dark Master's main fortresses. A good portion of the Dark Master's army is held up there. You may be good at fighting apes, but there's no way you'll make it past some of the nightmarish monsters that are held up there."

Considering he'd done exactly that even in the original timeline—and after several loops now he had even managed to one-shot even those specters riding those damn ghost horses in armor—he knew that he easily could by this point. Regardless, there was no way non-awake Cynder could know that, so Spyro decided not to worry her.

"I know, it's just that...the idea of the Dark Master possibly doing that to other living beings... He truly is nothing but a monster."

Cynder gave a nod of agreement. "Truer words were never spoken."

A silence followed before Cynder looked away. "Well, I better be going. I promised Ignitus I would help clean up the temple... Doesn't even begin to make up for a fraction of what I've done, but at least it's a start," she said as she turned around to leave.

Spyro smirked as he watched Cynder take one last glance at him before she left. He wasn't exactly sure why she had come to the training room this loop when she'd never done so before, but he was glad she had. Now he knew what to do for the next few loops. He wasn't sure if this would even be possible, but he did have a plan for the next few loops. It wasn't going to be easy, but one thing was for sure. He was going to be seeing the Chronicler a lot more in the future.

Hiding above the doorframe, Sparx grinned. From the confident smirk on his brother's face, it looked like the usual routine was going to have a major shake-up for the next few loops.

Classic Loop 2.3:

Spyro pressed up against a wall in the Artisan Realm, leaning his front paws against it as he stood on his rear legs. He let go of the wall. Legs wobbling, he stumbled back, trying to keep his balance as his 'arms' flailed wildly in an attempt to keep him upright. Managing to steady himself, Spyro paused. A few seconds passed without him falling flat on his behind and he smirked. Feeling confident, he took a step forward.

Not a second later, he found himself flat on his back.

Frowning, he glanced over to a few nearby dragons who were standing up straight on their hind legs like it was no problem.

"How the heck do they do that?" he muttered before he rolled onto his stomach.

Sparx chuckled, looking down at his friend as he rolled his eyes.

"I take it that *some* one is in a *hurry* to grow up?" Sparx said, his normal kazoo-like pronunciations managing to have a somewhat more understandable tone to the untrained ear.

Spyro smirked, resting his head on his paws. "Give me a break, Sparx. Considering how many loops we've been through, I could only guess by this point, if time were working normally, I'd be waaaaaaay past the point where I would have already learned how to walk on two paws by now."

"Fair enough," Sparx said with an amused expression before flying down and resting next to Spyro.

Spyro smiled. "I have to say, Sparx. You're really starting to get a handle on your dragonfly tongue."

"Th *an* ks. You'd *be* surprised at how going through *a loop* where people can actually *understand* you can properly *motivate some* one."

Spyro and Sparx chuckled. Spyro rolled over onto his back, looking at the sky. Sparx flew into the air. "So. What *did* you have planned for this *loop?* "

"Not much, really. Now that I got Gnasty out of the way in this loop, I was mostly planning to try to learn how to walk on two legs, take the part where I was supposed to fight Ripto off, that kind of stuff," Spyro said lazily, stretching a bit as he placed his forelegs behind his head.

Sparx raised an eyebrow. "What about Ripto?"

"Don't worry, Sparx. I told Hunter my plan the last time he was awake. I don't think we'll have to worry about Ripto anytime soon."

In Winter Tundra, the group of Hunter, the Professor, and Elora stood next to each other, exchanging confused and awkward glances. The Professor was testing out his super portal as per usual, and when it came time to enter the coordinates, instead of suggesting his birthday like he usually did, since Spyro had wanted to take a break, Hunter had decided to enter some new co-ordinates. As suspected, they hadn't ended up with Ripto attempting to take over Avalar this

time. However, what *had* come out of the portal had shocked even Hunter.

"Where the heck are we!?" Flame exclaimed, throwing his forelegs into the air as he sat up.

Ember just looked around the realm in confusion. In all the loops, *this* had certainly never happened before. As Hunter looked on at the pair of confused dragons, he scratched his head.

'Huh. Bianca's birthday leads to Dragon Village. Learn something new every loop.'

Hunter sighed. He hoped Ember wasn't awake. Spyro had personally appointed him the task of explaining what was going on with the realms should he run into her while they both were awake. Considering he was terrible at explaining things, that was easier said than done.

?:

'"All About Looping: By Saraswati and Iris. Edited by Seshat' ... Seriously?"

"Hey, it's better than the loopers going in blind before someone who actually knows exactly what's going on explains it to them."

"I know, Zephyr. Still... Do we really need a *'Looping for Dummies'* book? Couldn't we just, ya' know, *actually tell them* what's going on?"

"It's easier this way, and doesn't take as much time away from the repairs to Yggdrasil. Of course, it would go a lot quicker if you actually pulled your weight to begin with."

"Hey! Making sure their universes don't poop themselves when a loop begins is a lot of work in and of itself!"

"And yet, us other admins still find time to make sure we eventually won't need these loops at all. I would expect you to learn from the others."

"Yeah, yeah. I can take the hint."

"Sure you can. That's why I have to pull double the work to make up for your lack of effort." In the void, Zephyr sighed. "In any case, just make sure all the current loopers in the universes you watch over get a copy of that. I don't want to have to help you should one of them pull off something that causes a loop crash."

The other being groaned.

"Fine. I think it's about time both the Dragon Realms met their admin, anyways..."

Legends Loop 2.4:

It was always interesting having someone visit their loop. It seemed like it was starting to become more frequent ever since the loop with Jenny, and some of the results had been rather interesting. For the most part, a lot of them wanted to help, considering the state of their loop—not to mention that, considering Spyro and his companions were relatively new to the multiverse, unlike other loopers, they didn't have a millennium of experience under their belts to end major baseline problems quickly.

Spyro didn't really like the idea, feeling like it was his burden to bare, yet most loopers insisted. Some said Spyro and his companions needed a break from the war, some wanted something new to do in their dull looping lives, and others insisted just because their sense of justice was so strong that they couldn't just stand by and watch.

However, as much as he didn't like others taking on his burden, Spyro had to admit that sometimes the results were just entertaining to watch. After all the hell they had caused before the loops had

even started, seeing the apes flee in terror every time their current guest looper and his 'special weapon' showed up was just so damn satisfying.

"I still have no idea how that thing doesn't collapse under its own weight," Cynder muttered, looking on from the walls of Warfang with eyes wide.

It was yet another 'King of Terror' loop, though his reign hadn't lasted long this time when he'd met his untimely end in the form of a giant fist to the face.

Sparx buzzed by Cynder's head, stretching as he glanced at her from the corner of his eye.

"Why doesn't the Destroyer collapse under its own weight? Why does our world keep fusing with other worlds? Why are we in a time loop?" Sparx rambled on, crossing his arms. "Really, I stopped questioning things long ago back in the baseline when my brother turned out to be a legendary dragon destined to save the world."

Spyro couldn't help but chuckle as Cynder shot Sparx an annoyed glare. He looked back at the battle going on not far from Warfang, actually rather excited at seeing how it was going.

On one side stood the Destroyer who, despite the adversary standing in its way, was more focused on trying to complete its walk around the world than actually fighting. On the other side stood a large bipedal metal being, sporting a white, red, black and blue color scheme. It was knight-like in appearance, and was as almost as tall as the Destroyer itself. The metal giant merely smacked away the small magma monsters that were attempting to attack it, focusing almost completely on the apocalypse monster and making sure it made almost zero progress in its mission.

Atop the head of the giant metal being, a brown dragon sat in a small protective dome. Under his helmet, which had been altered to fit a dragon, Kouji growled. So far this loop had been an interesting tale

he could utterly break thanks to his giant mecha, but for once there was a being here who was proving to be quite the challenge.

"Mazinger! *ROKETTO PANCHI!"*

As if following its pilot's command, the Mazinger raised and pointed its fist at the Destroyer. The joint just before its elbow flashed before its fist detached and went flying at the Destroyer. Smashing through it like a hot knife through butter, it left a giant hole through the beast before the fist flew up into the air, homing back to the Mazinger and reattaching itself.

Watching as the Destroyer started to fall to pieces, Kouji wasn't fooled in the slightest. After the last few times he'd smashed this thing to bits, he wasn't surprised that, not a second after he'd caused it to collapse, it quickly reformed good as new. Growling at the beast's unwillingness to stay down, he let out a yell as he piloted the Mazinger to charge right at it, landing several punches and knocking it back considerably.

From the sidelines, Sparx looked on dully. "I think its been like an hour now since he started fighting that thing. Wonder how long he's going to keep this up before he realizes Malefor's just going to revive it every time he smashes it?"

Cynder shook her head. "Not sure. In any case, we should use this time to take Malefor down so it'll hopefully be taken down for good for a change. Spyro..."

Cynder turned to Spyro to tell him her plan, but she paused when she noticed the look on his face. His eyes were wide and had an odd spark to them, and he had an almost giddy smile on his face. Cynder couldn't help but raise an eyebrow.

"Spyro...?"

"Huh? O-oh!" Spyro said, jumping slightly as a blush appeared on his face. "R-right! Beat Malefor again! Got it!"

Cynder tilted her head, noting Spyro's eyes darting every which way as he tried to hide the blush on his face. Somehow, she got the feeling that Spyro was trying to hide something. Nonetheless, she brushed it off.

"Let's get going then," she said as she took off.

Through the many loops they had experienced, after some rather painful mess-ups, Spyro had found a way to get through the Belt of Fire without Ignitus having to sacrifice himself. Taking one last look at the battle going on behind them, he felt a sudden surge of energy. Smirking, he took to the air. He was going to make sure to give Malefor one hell of a battle, and with any luck, maybe he wouldn't have to pull the world back together this time around.

Classic Loop 2.4: (feat: Barryc100588)

Mac's Bar was open for business and full of loopers, including a certain purple dragon, and he was telling a story about one of his adventures to the audience. The Crusaders were especially captivated.

"I had just entered the third area of the Forgotten Worlds, Evening Lake, and I decided to go look and see if there was anyone captive there, too. I figured the Sorceress would do that, if Sergeant Bird and Sheila the Kangaroo were anything to go on. And sure enough, in the central tower of the area, I found a yeti in a cage with my old 'friend' Moneybags the Bear 'guarding' him."

Apple Bloom chose this moment to interrupt. "It's incredible how, how..."

"Duplicitous!" Sweetie piped up.

"Um, what does that mean, Sweetie?" Scootaloo asked.

"It means to be deceptive or double-dealing. In this case, Moneybags agreed to keep the animals the Sorceress captured locked up, but also agreed to free those same animals if paid," Sweetie explained.

Scootaloo coughed what sounded like "dictionary" under her breath.

Spyro chuckled. "He is duplicitous, Apple Bloom. Now back to my story. I paid him a thousand gems to free Bentley, and after calling him an—and I quote—'avaricious, duplicitous, larcenous ursine', he clubbed Moneybags with his club and inviting me into his world."

Twilight winced. "He sounds pretty violent."

Rainbow chose then to speak up. "I don't know about you, Twilight, but if I was locked up by someone for money, and that same person freed me for money, I'd get pretty violent too."

Other loopers in the room were nodding in agreement.

Spyro nodded. "Each of the captive animals were violent to Moneybags, if you recall."

(Oh hai, Infinite Loops. Been a while.

Anyways, remember in the last chapter where I said cross-overs wouldn't be that frequent? Yeah... Story behind that.

The HTTYD loop was the only cross-over loop I had planned for this chapter, but someone had another FiM loop they had written which made it four classic loops to three legends loops, something my OCD would not allow, I had to add an extra legends loop to balance it out... and sense a lot of the 'baseline' loops I have planned require Cynder to be over her inital shock over all this, I had to go with a fused loop I had planned for a later chapter. Again, I promise cross-over loops won't be an 'every other loop' thing like most Infinite Loop fics.

Also, speaking of loops written by other people, the Spyro loops now has its own Space Battles thread! If anyone has their own Spyro loops they'd like to add, the link to it is on my profile under the section detailing this fic. I'm also thinking of making a FF.N thread for this for anyone who doesn't have a Space Battles account.

W ould also like to thank a user there by the name of Conceptulist for the whole 'Spyro learns about the dream scape' idea. My original plan for having him tell when someone was awake in a loop involved him reverse engineering the EoH (how the FiM loopers tell if someones awake), but admittedly that didn't make much sense. Plus, this allows for some rather *interesting* loops in the future. For those wondering how Spyro could learn such a thing in the first place, I plan on explaining that in a future chapter.

Legends loops:

2.1: Infinity plus one armor.

2.2: How *not* to train your dragon.

2.3: A new plan takes form.

2.4: Kouji can break loops on the fly! He can wreck major threats! In his robot man! Mazinger Z! /shot

Classic loops:

2.1: Taste like toothache.

2.2: The plan for a peaceful village.

2.3: Wonder what Spyro's birthday would lead to?

2.4: Sweetie is the best dictionary. /shot)

Variations,magic, and new powers! Oh my!

(Snips beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments below.)

Legends Loop 2.5: (Legends Loop 1.6 continuation)

Loud crashes and rumbling rang throughout the temple, echoing out from the training area. Test dummies and targets went flying everywhere as chunks of earth flew every which way. Spyro growled. *'Why!? Why did she have to get caught up in this too!?'*

He grabbed a test dummy, grinding his teeth into it as he flung it across the room. It didn't seem all that long ago, but what he had found out would haunt him for the rest of the loops.

Cynder was looping. Cynder was being forced to relive everything she had done against her will.

Spyro growled, slamming the ground and sending a pillar of earth up that flung a test dummy towards the ceiling. It had been bad enough when it had just been him and Sparx. At least, after doing everything over and over again, he had been able to change things in his favor, and he had never been in massive peril from the start. Cynder, however...

Spyro let out a roar, slamming his paws together, which caused chunks of the ground to rise up and smash a test dummy flat. He couldn't take it anymore. He had managed to hold up this long because he had been the only one in real danger. Now he had to worry about Cynder and what it was like for her at the start when she was 'awake' for the loop. Spyro charged forward, tearing into a test dummy, flinging bits of hay every which way.

"Calm down."

Spyro raised his head, glaring back out of the corner of his eye. Terrador was overseeing his earth training as per usual, but this was

the first time he had said something different.

"You have to stay calm in battle, no matter who it is you're facing."

Spyro huffed. He knew his mentor was just trying to help, but at the same time he had absolutely no idea what was going on. Spyro took a deep breath.

"I'm sorry..." he muttered, looking away. Despite everything, Spyro still knew better than to disrespect one of his mentors.

"I know you want to end this war, Spyro, we all do," Terrador said, his ever sturdy gaze keeping firm. "But you can't let your emotions get the best of you, especially on the battlefield."

"You don't understand... There's no way you can understand," Spyro muttered, turning to face his mentor. "Everything feels like it's crashing down around me. Like everything's spiraling out of control, and I can't do anything to stop it! It's just, I..." Spyro groaned, grabbing his head. He didn't even know why he was trying to explain all this to Terrador. He doubted there was a proper way to explain it that would make him understand.

Terrador closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. He reopened them slowly. "Spyro, I know all this was forced on you at such a young age —"

'Yeah... "Young.'"

"—and, believe me, if it weren't for how desperate things were, we wouldn't have forced this burden on you. I won't pretend like I understand what you're going through. I doubt I ever fully could. However, there is something my mentor once told me. I'm not sure how much it holds up with what you're going through, but please listen..."

"'No matter who it is you face, no matter how hard things may get, you cannot lose yourself. If you lose yourself, you lose control of the

battle. If you lose control of the battle, you lose everything.'"

Spyro listened to Terrador's words with an indifferent look. They sounded so simple, yet the deep meaning was not lost on him. Terrador looked down, a calm look on his face. "Again, I'm not sure how well it holds up with what you're going through. I hope, at least, the meaning of those words got through."

"Yeah... I think I got it," Spyro said, taking a deep breath.

"Good," Terrador said, walking up to him. "Now then, you already appear to be well-skilled in the earth element, but as long as you fight with rage, you can never fully master it. You must always fight with a level head, unmoving like the earth under your paws. Once you have learned that, come speak to me. I have something to teach you that may one day help you turn the tide of battle."

With that, Terrador turned and left the training room. Watching him leave, Spyro sighed. *'No matter who it is you face, no matter how hard things may get, you cannot lose yourself.'*

Spyro shook his head. *'I get it... Getting angry over this isn't going to help anyone. The only thing that'll happen if I let this overtake me is risking being overtaken by my dark side, which will* definitely *not help anyone.'*

Spyro looked towards the balcony. He had no idea if Cynder was awake this loop, if she was being forced against her will to relive her early loop actions once again. He shook his head, hoping that it wasn't the case. Taking a deep breath, he looked up with a determined glint in his eyes.

'Don't worry, Cynder. I'll figure out a way to get us out of this... Please, just hold on...'

Classic Loop 2.5 (Feat: UkeleleNarwhal)

Spyro hated calligraphy. Not the art of aesthetically pleasing handwriting, though he didn't have much of an opinion on it anyway. No, he hated drawing triangles to magically teleport.

"C'mon, I drew a triangle, I should be teleporting!" His cry of frustration sounded throughout the courtyard of Midday Gardens, and a few heads turned to see what the commotion was about.

The purple dragon angrily scribbled in the air with his tail, leaving blue glowing brushstrokes hanging in the air. The problem wasn't that he was ignorant of the proper method to draw a three-sided polygon, it was that the 'powers that be' had decided that Spyro would not teleport from this location, not without inscribing a triangle with his tail at least an infinite amount of times.

Where was his destination that he was this upset over such an issue?

"Ugh, I'm never going to get to Red's dojo unless I start walking, will... Wait, wait, hold on...?" Suddenly, a miracle occurred. The scribbles that he had left in the air were inexplicably recognized as a three-sided shape, and Spyro was quickly whisked away in a whirlwind of cyan polygons.

An instant later, Spyro found himself at his aforementioned destination, a building in the Magic Crafters domain that took heavy inspiration from Oriental architecture. His mouth was agape, shocked at the incredulity of the event that had just transpired.

"Just, no. I just can't. Those elders, how could they think that magic calligraphy could help me in a fight against a professional evil sorcerer?"

Trying to gloss over his present frustration, Spyro made his way up the steps to the pavilion of the pagoda that stood before him. He had a mission, one that he had planned on ever since he had started looping, and he was not going to back down, not after he'd

scrounged up enough work ethic to ask his elders to teach him something for once.

Spyro figured that, if anyone knew an alternative to flailing his tail around like an idiot to perform magic tricks, it was Red. Ever since the Dark Sorcerer's improbable defeat, Red had been released from the puppet master's control and had been reintegrated into dragon society as a sensei at the Arcana Dojo, where he instructed young dragons in arts like dragon-kata and—the bane of Spyro's existence—magic calligraphy.

Funny thing was, when Red had duked it out with the purple dragon, he had never tried to call a time-out to figure out why his summoning spells weren't working. Rather, with just a wave of his hands or a wand, magic just did its job. This proved that there was some method to perform magic without dealing with scribbles, Spyro reasoned.

Spyro walked through the entrance and saw Red working with Flame, trying to help him find the proper stance to parry a tail swipe.

"Flame, if an opponent tried to knock your legs out from under you, what would be the best position to get into?" Red queried.

"Wait, I know this one. I just jump, right?"

"What if you couldn't jump in time?"

"Um...I fall."

"Exactly, that's why you must be perpendicular to the direction of your foe's strike. Therefore, only two of your limbs will be affected and you can recover immediately to counter." Red noticed Spyro walking in his direction and decided to end his discussion there.

"Right, I knew that."

"Sure you did. Go practice with the other students, and please remember what I said."

Flame turned towards the rest of the class and walked on, while Red turned his attention to his former adversary.

"Spyro, how goes it? I hope you rested well after the whole Sorcerer incident." Red's voice faltered a bit on the word "Sorcerer." It was a sensitive topic, considering that he had been possessed and reduced to a simple pawn during both of his failed conquests for world domination.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I actually came here to ask you something."

"Really? Then please, do tell."

"How do you use magic?"

"Is this a joke? You did defeat the Sorcerer, right?"

"No, I want to know how *you* use magic. I have never seen you using your tail to draw out shapes and symbols when you cast a spell. Why is that?"

Red was aware of what Spyro was asking, and he was unsure what to make of this behavior. Spyro had never exhibited a real interest in whatever his elders taught him, and had mostly figured it out himself. For him to arrive at the dojo out of his own volition, and to ask for a lesson from an elder, let alone a former enemy, was unheard of. Of course, Red thought, when he had been a child, he had not been afraid to experiment. Perhaps Spyro was in that phase... Who was he to keep him in the dark about this? He would've found out sooner or later. Spyro might as well learn it from him.

"Come, follow me." Red guided Spyro to a training room in the dojo, and had him sit across from him on a mat. With a chuckle, Red began his instruction.

"I wanted to be a magician and solve the problems of others with my wand. What I didn't understand, however, is that centuries of reasoning, knowledge and calculation stood behind the simple spell that could change an object's color. Now that I am old and have squandered my magic on evil things, you must understand that, when you use magic, you are being supported on the shoulders of giants. Keep that in mind as we begin."

Red reflected on himself and willed an orange translucent rectangle to materialize on the wall behind him. He gathered his thoughts and set them aside as he summoned a line of text to appear on it:

"Red-magician

Please enter a command:

[#!]_"

All it took was one look and Spyro was hooked. *'That's so freaking cool! I totally regret putting this off for so many loops!'*

"I figured that you would be somewhat impressed. The words and symbols you see are messages from what is known as a magic command line. What's that, you ask? How about I show you what it is."

"Please enter a command:

[#!]run

To use, select an object and set it to a color.

[#!]select Spyro-nonMagician, set to red

Setting color... Done!

[#!] _ "

Spyro noticed an orange glow around his form and saw his scales turn crimson right before his eyes.

"And now, you should notice that you are completely indistinguishable from that Flame fellow from earlier."

"Heh heh, that was actually kinda funny."

"So, did you notice something about those words that appeared and the color you are now?"

"Yeah, you wrote something about turning me red, and you used magic to make it happen."

"Correct! You have won the grand prize, an all-expense paid curriculum on how to summon and control a magic command line of your very own! Do you, Spyro, accept this prize?"

Spyro's eyes had a spark, a spark of determination, the light of inspiration, and the will to risk perspiration.

"Bring it on, Red."

Legends Loop 2.6 (Feat: AbZHz101)

Spyro awoke to the sight of a purple egg. Blinking, he looked down and saw that, not only did he stand quite a bit taller than usual, but his scales were also now shades of rusty red and orange. With morbid curiosity and a slight dawning horror, Spyro looked into his in-loop memories for one specific fact: what others called him. Sure enough, he had looped in as his mentor, Ignitus.

Instantly, Spyro banished the rest of his in-loop memories regardless of the consequences, not wanting to intrude on his mentor's privacy. Spyro-Ignitus walked through the temple hatchery, having a polite nod for every dragon that he passed, silently marveling at all the

eggs. He didn't know where Cynder's egg was at the moment, but that did little to detract from the scene before him.

He vowed that he would protect them. And it should be such an easy task. He had saved the world well over a thousand times, and routed the apes countless more. Surely he had the power to stop one attack. He slipped to the temple walls, under pretence to stargaze, but in truth to be ready for when the apes attacked. He found that he was not the only one with such plans, as Terrador was already there.

"It is a beautiful night, Ignitus. The sky is clear," Terrador rumbled.

"And the air is crisp," the Anchor in his mentor's body replied. He strode next to Terrador and tried to take the entire scene in.

"You're worried," Terrador noted.

Spyro jerked, turning to look at the Earth Guardian.

"Ignitus, how long have we known each other?" Terrador asked with a long-suffering sigh. "If you think Volteer, Cyril or I cannot read you as well if not better than you can us, you need to dunk your head in the lake. You don't have to pretend for us. We all know that each of us put on the air of confidence and act like we know what we're doing, but most of the time we're walking blind. We all became Guardians young, a blessing to our own teachers, yes, but it doesn't change the fact that we are the youngest four ever recorded, and you are the youngest leader our order has ever had. As someone who knows what stress can do, I ask that you not pretend for us, and as your friend I'm telling you that, if you keep it up, I *will* pound you into next week."

Internally, Spyro was astonished. He had never seen this side of Terrador before. Perhaps the attack and subsequent time had worn it away, or maybe the extra years had padded it to the point that it could no longer be seen, or perhaps Terrador simply found it inappropriate to divulge such things to one so far below his age. As he marveled, his loop reflexes kicked in and he chuckled. "Duly

noted, my friend. I have this feeling that tonight... *something* will happen. I don't know what, but I just can't relax."

Terrador grumbled in agreement. "I feel it too, Ignitus. Still, you must be careful, or it will turn out that our Fire Guardian snapped from chasing phantoms."

"Just... If something goes wrong. Protect the eggs, Terrador. Please."

"I will."

The two stood in companionable silence for fifteen minutes more. It was near that time that they began to feel the earth beneath them trembling. Sharing a glance, the two dragons bolted for the hatchery, only to find the quickest way in already swarming with the enemy. Growling in rage at such an offence, Spyro lit up a clear path. Then, when they reached the first junction to the outside, he turned away from the eggs.

"Go!" he called to Terrador. "I'll see if I can't stem the tide."

There was no hesitation in Terrador's steps as he galloped down the now empty hall. Spyro charged down the hall, splitting at the turn to come out in the training hall, one of the quickest routes from the outside to the hatchery. He called upon his elements, but something was odd. Fire leapt forth, far more readily than he could ever recall, but the other three... He felt an almost grating, as if he was trying to rub two jagged stones together. No matter, he could work with that.

The room was lit by the burning corpses of the invading apes, and the walls stained red with their blood as he meticulously, *efficiently* destroyed every enemy that set foot within.

Once the flood of apes had disappeared, Spyro-Ignitus turned and headed for the hatchery. There he saw an impossible sight. There were apes in the hatchery, revelling like teenagers at a rave in a

friend's house. And the eggs... Smashed, bashed, broken and beaten, with more still yet whole ones in their filthy hands.

He trembled. No way; it wasn't fair...

'NO!'

Spyro had one purpose: defend the eggs. There was an instant where all the air in the room seemed to be pulled toward him... And then he exploded in purple flames. He launched forward, a flaming missile viciously removing heads, torsos, arms and legs from bodies, but with surprising speed and gentleness catching the dragon eggs and returning them to their place. But the apes kept coming, and they continued to break.

They soon knew his fury, and in the underworld damned their actions, but one dragon just wasn't enough. Maybe it was hours later, maybe days, maybe moments, but eventually they stopped. The only things in the room were a *very* furious dragon and a plethora of broken eggs. But in his heart he knew that one of the apes that had run in had also made it back out. Snarling, the mad dragon let out a colossal roar and blazed down the path that he knew the ape had taken. Soon enough, he found two companies of retreating soldiers who were unsure if they should be celebrating or not.

The answer was quickly decided to be "not" as the enraged Anchor burst among the rearmost company. The apes fought for their lives, but the group not currently engaged tried to flee. Cowards. That could not be tolerated. He *willed* the earth to rise, and the ground beneath the apes *exploded.* The few that had time for a death cry wailed as molten earth devoured them, leaving not even the bones. Then he slashed before him, and the earth nearby replied.

It was only after the last trace of his foes had been snuffed out that Spyro's alertness began to drop. He realized his leads, his trail, had gone. *They were all gone.*

He didn't know how long he had been standing there wallowing in his failure when he felt three familiar presences some distance off. Spyro didn't even have the strength to lift his head to acknowledge them.

"Ignitus..." He shouldn't have been surprised that it was Terrador who spoke first.

"...I failed... They're all gone..." he heard himself say. How odd, that he seemed to be speaking without thinking.

"The fault lies with *all* of us," Cyril emphasized.

"And there is one success to be had this night," Volteer added hopefully, the events of the night subduing even his tongue.

"You spirited away an egg," Spyro stated. "The purple one."

"Yes," the Electric Guardian agreed. "I realize that it is a small comfort, but at least one still lives."

"No," Spyro replied, dully shaking his head. "If they could not find the egg they were after, they will have taken another as hostage and slave. That we could not prevent that only makes our defeat all the more complete."

"Then we shall find and free them. And leave nothing to chance," Cyril replied.

"We don't know where they *are* !" Spyro insisted. He knew that one day the Ape King would take Cynder to the Well of Souls, but he didn't know when that would happen or where they had been previously.

"We *will* find them," Terrador asserted. "And we will do right by them...both of them, for the ones that we failed."

Classic Loop 2.6

Spyro darted along the path of the Artisan world with his head low, not bothering to look where he was going in the slightest.

"Spyro!" Sparx called, darting after him.

He didn't respond, continuing to run as fast as his paws would carry him. Spyro was no stranger to bad loops, having caused a few after a prank went awry or during an odd variation, but this...

Spyro tripped over his front paws, skidding to a stop as he tumbled. Landing face first, his body fell to the ground with a thud. He lay there, staring off dully into space. Sparx flew in front of him, looking him straight in the eyes.

"Leave me alone, Sparx."

Sparx frowned, looking at Spyro with a concerned glint in his eyes. "Spyro..."

Spyro sighed, looking away. "I'm a jerk, aren't I?"

"You're not a jerk, Spyro. It's just...these loops are starting to get to you."

Spyro didn't say anything, just looked down. He couldn't believe how far he'd taken this loop. It was a 'lonely' loop, where only he and Sparx were awake. It had all started out with a simple idea: just point out the various flaws of logic most of the people in this world came up with. It was all good and hilarious fun for the first part of his adventure, but then he got to Avalar and the Forgotten Realms and...

"Gah! You're so aggravating! If it wasn't for the fact that we need a dragon, we would have sent you back a long time ago!"

"Alright, you little purple show off! Have fun collecting all the orbs by yourself!"

Spyro winced, grasping his head. He should have taken that as a sign to cut it out right then and there, but *no.*

'It won't matter anyways once the loop ends.'

Spyro growled at the naïve thought, having used that to justify his actions so far. If he had just stuck to pestering, that would have been one thing. But no, he'd just *had* to see what the worlds his 'friends' usually dealt with were like. If he had just asked to join them, it would have been one thing. *'No. No, no, freaking no,'* Spyro thought, closing his eyes tightly.

"Alright then, ya' little purple whelp! Have fun fightin' the Sorceress by yourself!"

"That is enough of this, private! If you won't behave like a proper solider, then I'm dishonorably discharging from this war! Having to deal with that shame would be much better than putting up with you!"

"Why you uncultured, infuriating swine! I may be grateful to you for freeing me from that cage, but if you are going to continue to act so pompous, egotistical, and self-absorbed, then I am sad to inform you that you now have one less ally against the Sorceress!"

"GAAH! People may tell me I'm crazy, but at least I'm sane enough to know not to associate myself with dirtbags like you! Seriously, I've seen Rhynocs with better dispositions than you!"

Spyro curled up into a ball.

"I should have stopped all this the second Elora told me off, but *no,* " Spyro said, rolling over onto his back and placing his paws over his eyes. "I had to keep up this stupid idea. I just *had* to keep acting like the most condescending little prick in all the Dragon Realms!"

Spyro sighed, lowering his front paws as he looked at the sky. "And because of me, not only does everyone I know hate me, but Bianca..."

Spyro winced. Because Hunter had been too angry with him to ever consider helping him again, he hadn't been there when they'd fought the Sorceress. Without him being there, and thanks to Spyro's general obnoxious persona, even when Bianca had found out what the Sorceress had been planning to do with the eggs...

Spyro shuddered. He would never forget the sight of Bianca falling into a pit of lava for as long as he lived.

"What the heck is wrong with me, Sparx?" Spyro muttered, rolling onto his side and curling into a ball. "Am I really becoming this bad of a dragon...?"

Sparx frowned, hovering over him. "Listen, Spyro... You're not a bad dragon. If anything, the fact that you're feeling this way shows that you're still the Spyro I know before the loops started, which is a major relief."

Sparx turned around and looked up at the sky. "I can't even begin to imagine what it must be like for you, to see your friends forget about you every time the loop resets. The only reason I've managed to stay sane so far is because I'm in this with my best friend, and the only other person I'm really friends with is Zoe, and even then, seeing her forget about me each loop... It's really maddening."

Sparx sighed before glancing back towards Spyro. "Tell me, Spyro... It's hard to see them like the way you used to, before the loops started up, right?"

Spyro glanced away, but gave a slight nod in agreement. Sparx kept an eye on him before looking back towards the sky.

"Well, then at least this shows one thing. Even though they may not feel the same as the ones we know, we still treat them as our friends. We know when we've gone too far when it comes to them, and it shows that, despite what these loops may do to us, we still have some form of grasp on ourselves."

"And really, I suppose that's the best we can do until whatever's causing this time warp stops." Sparx turned around, a grin on his face. "And who knows. With any luck, they'll hopefully start looping too, like Hunter did."

A silence fell over the two as Spyro took in Sparx's words. He never knew Sparx had such a philosophical side to him, but his words struck a cord. The dragon raised his head, silent for a few seconds before a soft smile appeared on his face.

"Thanks, Sparx. You always know how to cheer me up when I'm down."

"No problem. Anytime."

Spyro got to his paws, shaking his head. "I think I'm just going to try to keep things baseline and try to salvage whatever I can after what I made of myself this loop," he said, looking towards Sparx. "And I know for a fact what I'm going to do for the next loop."

Spyro sighed and began to walk. It would be some time before Red attacked, and in the meantime it would give him a while to think of a way he could make up for everything he'd done to everyone this loop. He knew there was likely no way he could patch things up with everyone. Even though they wouldn't remember after the reset, *he* most certainly would. This would likely be a loop he would not soon forget for a good long while...

Legends Loop 2.7

Pokémon trainer Red sighed. Some loops were odd, what with the whole multiverse fusing shenanigans. His normal loop was nothing he couldn't get used to. Having to re-catch Pokémon he already caught was annoying, though the few of his Pokémon that were looping made it rather easy to meet up with them again. Dealing with Team Rocket and the other tons of villainous teams was also becoming rather easy, even when the levels of his Pokémon got

reset, due to being savvy enough to keep a mountain's worth of vitamins and rare candies in his subspace pocket.

Of course, dealing with a dragon that looked like it had come right out of the pits of hell and was dead-set on causing the apocalypse was something completely new to him... For once.

Red looked up at the rather imposing gateway to the beast's lair. Stopping the apocalypse was nothing new to him, having personally taken down Team Galactic several times now. Dealing with non-looping big bads from other loops also wasn't too much of a problem, either. That still didn't stop the odd unnerved feeling he had in the pit of his stomach. Regardless, with a determined look, he leant his body on the door and began to push it open.

The area was dark. Why it was that evil beings of unimaginable proportions loved dark areas, he would never know. Then the lights flashed on, revealing a giant purple dragon.

"So," the demonic dragon announced in a low, gravely voice. "You are the child that has disrupted my plans. I've been expecting you."

This dragon, the 'Dark Master' as he referred to himself—' *Geez. This guy couldn't have chosen a more generic title if he tried*' —came from a time before even Pokémon existed, if his loop memories were anything to go by. It was only recently he had managed to escape whatever hellhole he had been sealed in, which likely meant he didn't know much in the ways of Pokémon.

Red smirked, grabbing a Pokéball from his belt and tossing it into the air. In a flash of light, a black and blue deer-like creature appeared in front of him. It had taken Red a while to track down Xerneas, but he slowly got the feeling it was going to be worth it. The Dark Master merely looked on with an amused glance.

"Really, now? Do you think these pathetic beings you humans catch for your own amusement can harm me?"

Red smirked. "As a matter of fact, I do. Xerneas, Moon Blast!"

The Dark Master wore a grin that showed far too many sharp teeth than any being should ever have. He watched the Pokémon in question begin to glow before sending a wave of energy out in a futile attempt to defy him. However, said grin was quickly wiped off his face as he went stumbling back, a searing pain unlike any he had ever felt washing over him. Staggering to his paws, the Dark Master let out an inhuman growl.

"You insolent little—!"

Red watched as the dragon opened his maw and shot a purple beam out towards his group. Xerneas took a defensive stance as it was hit full force. The grin returned to the Dark Master's face as a cloud of dust kicked up in the lair. Then he was almost knocked off his paws once again at what he saw.

As the dust cleared, Red wished he had a camera so he could take a picture of the look the Dark Master had on his face. Xerneas stood defiantly, completely unfazed by the attack. The Dark Master tried his best to respond to this illogical chain of events, words escaping him before he finally managed to say something.

"What...what is this *abomination* ?"

Red smirked. If there was one thing he absolutely loved above everything else in fused loops...

"A fairy type," Red said, crossing his arms. "Get wrecked."

...it was when the villains from other universes found out about type advantages.

Classic Loop 2.7: (Feat: UkeleleNarwhal)

"So, as a part of the Elite Four, I have Pokémon battles with trainers who come here?"

"Yes," Diantha explained, considering to call for a substitute. The most enthusiastic and unconventional Elite Four member she had ever known appeared to be a bit off today. And not in his usual way, either.

An actual dragon being a trainer was rather uncommon, and at times the other elites had called into question whether the purple elite was actually a Pokémon. Fortunately, his skills had proven him worthy to the Pokémon League of Kalos, and that was why Diantha did not fire Spyro on the spot when he asked with complete sincerity: "What the hell is a Pokémon?"

"Look, why don't you train with your Pokémon for a bit, it'll probably jog your memory." The champion left for her chamber. She didn't have time to deal with this, especially when that amazing child who had defeated Team Flare was coming today. This was a time to prepare.

Spyro gazed at the strange spherical devices left in his care. They were supposedly called "Pokéballs" and they kept "Pokémon" inside. *'Geez, these names sound like marketing spiel if you ask me.'*

He searched for a way to free the creature that was contained within. When he activated the button between the two hemispheres, a flash of light appeared, and in its place a colorful bipedal lizard stood.

"So, are you a Pokémon?"

"Are you alright, boss? How could you not know what I am?" The Druddigon balked at the strange question and showed concern for his trainer.

"Um, never mind that. So, remind me again how we handle challengers, I need to check if you remember." An admirably executed lie through the teeth.

"Well, we usually come out in a certain order, one at a time, and you tell me what to do, and if I end up in trouble or faint, you call me back and pull someone else out."

Spyro ran this through his mind and felt that this was a perfect loop to fool around with. He pulled the lizard down to his level and whispered to him his sly scheme.

"But that's against the rul—"

"Hey, Diantha wanted me to give her special guest a fight to remember, right?"

"But that isn't how we do things!"

"But it's how *I* do things. Now, let's see what you guys can do, and I'll figure out the rest."

A lone trainer named Calem walked to the last remaining hallway, the Dragonmark chamber. *'Heh, those other elites got swept. I don't even need to worry about the champ.'*

With that thought, he took the elevator at the end of the corridor. Once the lift reached its destination, the trainer who had tackled Team Flare and saved the world from a doomsday weapon watched as a stone statue of a dragon exfoliated to reveal...a small purple dragon? His first reaction was to pull out his Pokédex and identify the creature that stood before him, which proved fruitless.

Spyro glared at the teenager across the arena, who appeared to be texting. "Hey, put down that phone, will ya?"

Calem looked around for the source of this voice, until the dragon explicitly made his presence known.

"Are you dense, or what? Look at the talking purple dragon, if you please."

The trainer gawked at the reptilian elite. When he'd heard that one of the Elite Four specialized in dragon types, he could have never imagined this.

"That's better. So, you came for a challenge, right?"

The boy nodded in affirmation.

"Of course you did. And since I'm your last elite before the champ, I feel that I should leave a lasting impression, which is why I thought of something special for you."

Spyro released his Noivern into the arena, and Calem released his Glaceon with a confident smirk. His facial expression morphed into that of shock, however, when Spyro himself glided into the arena and struck a battle pose with his draconic companion.

"The other elites may have stood by while their monsters kicked butt. Not me."

With that, a battle cry sounded from the large-eared wyvern, and Spyro looked up at his partner in crime. *'Time to blow this punk's mind!'*

(Hey Infinite Loops. Been a while... again. This time for a good reason. The space battles sister thread has really taken off in the last few days, and currently I and several other writers are working on a massive collab loop that will have to be broken up into individual chapters. What is this super loop about though? You'll just have to wait and see. Until then, consider these loops the 'prequel' loops to it.

Anyways, for those wondering what Magical Calligraphy is, it's an ability Spyro picked up in the last game of the Classic Spyro series, 'Shadow Legacy'. In that game, it's said that purple dragons in the Classic setting have massive reserves and an affinity towards magic, and Magical Calligraphy was a way they

could touch upon this. However, if the snip the person who actually played that game submitted was anything to go by, apparently it was very finicky to work with. As such, the 'Magic Command Line' is basically an improved version of it that's much more stable and allows Spyro to access a wider range of magical abilities.

Pretty neat, that. I really liked that concept, as you can tell by the fact that I've accepted it into the collection of loops. Should be fun to play around with.

As always, if you want to contribute your own loop/snippet to this, either PM me so I can set up a docX to receive it, or post it to the space battles thread I have linked on my profile page.

Legend Loops:

2.5: Always listen to your elders. They're always there to help you... Even if they have no idea what's really going on.

2.6: "But the future refused to change..."

2.7: Type advantages: Breaking other loops since 2014.

Classic Loops:

2.5: "Any sufficiently analyzed magic is indistinguishable from science!"

2.6: And this is why you don't act like dick in the loops. Just because no else remembers after a reset doesn't mean *you* won't either. Good thing Spyro learned that now before he turned into another Sakura.

2.7: Spyro better hope Calem doesn't have any fairy types on him...)

When two Realms finally collide (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments below.)

Fused Loop 1.1:

(Awkward Beginnings) (Feat: TokoWH, AbZHz101, and UkeleleNarwhal)

Spyro groaned, slowly opening his eyes as he raised his paw in front of his face to block out the sun. He glanced around. The first thing he noticed was he was in a bed. Quickly looking under his blanket, he let out a sigh of relief.

'Looks like I'm trading places with Flame again.'

Spyro sighed, falling back into his bed. Another break from his adventures sounded pretty good, though they weren't too bothersome now that he had done them so many times. Given a choice between that and something he actually *hadn't* done a million times over, he was more than willing to take it. Covering up in the blankets, he rested his head on the pillow.

"Spyro! Time for breakfast!"

Spyro stirred, a frown as his face as he cuddled up in the pillows more. He didn't care about food. For now, all he wanted to do was rest. Hearing footsteps going by his room, his frown deepened at the thought of his parents—whoever they were for this loop—trying to get him up early. His frown slowly disappeared, though, as he heard the footsteps slowly get softer. Several seconds passed and he slowly began to feel himself slip back into sleep.

"Spyro! Breakfast!"

Spyro growled. If whoever his mother was this loop wanted him to leave this bed, she was going to have to come up here and *make*

him leave it. Spyro took a deep breath, relaxing a bit as several seconds passed. It wasn't long before he heard footsteps making their way to his room. Hearing the door open, he let out an annoyed sigh. Several more seconds passed before whoever was in the room finally spoke up.

"U-uh... Spy...ro...?"

The voice was clearly a male's voice, yet it sounded too young to be an adult dragon. Whoever was addressing him sounded rather confused too. Maybe it was another looper he hadn't found out about him yet, surprised to have the hero of the Dragon Realms as his brother. Regardless, he hoped whoever it was would take the hint that he just wanted to sleep in today.

"Um... Breakfast?"

Spyro growled. "Food later. Sleep now."

A few seconds passed as Spyro curled up into the bed. However, when he felt a paw touch his shoulder and gently shake him, he let out an annoyed groan. "Ugh, hey. Didn't you hear me? I said- *!?* "

Spyro had finally been forced out from under the blanket he had buried himself under, turning around to glare at the dragon who was determined not to let him have his rest. However, as he caught sight of who was standing next to his bed, he nearly fell out of it in shock.

Jaw dropping as his eyes went wide, he saw that the dragon standing next to him...was himself.

Both dragons just stared at each other wide-eyed, neither one saying a single thing, frozen on the spot. Finally, the Spyro on the bed shook his head.

'Either I need more sleep than I thought, or these loops are starting to get flat out weird *...'*

Both Spyros stood at the dining table, awkwardly glancing at each other out of the corner of their eyes. To say this was odd for both of them would have been a massive understatement. Had it not been for their mother for this loop calling to them and snapping them back to whatever warped reality this was, they likely would've still been frozen back up in the bedroom.

The Spyro on the left glanced over to his mother. She was light blue. In honesty, it was actually rather interesting to see Nina as a dragon. Had it not been for the duplicate, that would have been the highlight of this loop so far.

Nina smiled, heading over to the table and placing two bowls in front of them. Spyro raised an eyebrow as he looked at what appeared to be several small rings of wheat in it. Glancing over to the 'other' Spyro, he saw that he had already picked up a spoon and started eating, but he paused when he noticed his 'brother' was staring at him. Glancing back down at the bowl, Spyro brought his face down and started to take a few bites.

Raising back up, he paused, some milk and wheat rings on his face as he chewed. *'Milk and wheat... Odd combo. Barely something a dragon would eat. It's alright, though, I guess.'*

As he swallowed, he glanced over at the other Spyro. Having stopped eating, the other Spyro was now giving him a rather odd look. Then he quickly looked away and said nothing.

"Spyro, please use a spoon. We're not animals, after all."

Both Spyros looked at their 'mother'. One of the two smirked. "But I am using a spoon."

Spyro noticed the mischievous smirk on the other Spyro's face as he said that. Shaking his head, causing bits of wheats and milk to scatter, he looked at Nina, who had a slightly confused expression on her face.

"Uh, no. Not you, Spyro. The Spyro who just stuck his mouth in the bowl," she said before she lowered her head and sighed. "Ugh, I knew I shouldn't have let your father name you two. 'It'll be funny,' he said. 'They'd still know who we're addressing,' he said..."

Spyro looked at the other Spyro, frowning as his 'brother' smirked in amusement. Slightly caught off guard when Nina took a rag and wiped his face off, he glared at the other Spyro as he heard him chuckling.

Looking back down at the bowl, he noticed a spoon by it. He narrowed his eyes. Dragons were *not* supposed to use these things. Regardless, seeing how Nina was now making sure to watch him, he doubted he could convince her otherwise and lowered his head in defeat. Slowly raising his paw, he attempted to pick up the utensil normally used by species that actually had *thumbs.* Claws fumbling as it kept slipping out of his paw, he narrowed his eyes, hearing the other Spyro chuckling at him for his inability to use something that was never designed for dragon use. Finally, likely through a stroke of pure luck, Spyro managed to grasp the spoon in such a way that it finally stayed in his paw.

Shakily moving his paw over to the bowl, he put the spoon in it and raised the odd milk and wheat concoction up. Trying his best to keep a good grasp on the spoon handle from the added weight, Spyro lowered his head in and attempt to take a bite.

CRUNCH!

Spyro started to chew, but noted there was an odd taste compared to before. looking down, he had saw that he had bitten the head of the spoon clean off the handle.

"Spyro, please. We're running out of spoons."

"What? He's just getting some iron in his diet."

Spyro glanced over to the other Spyro. There was an amused expression on his duplicate's face as he rested his head on his foreleg. Spyro narrowed his eyes before spitting the mashed-up spoon into the nearby trash. Closing his eyes and regaining his composure, he went back to eating the way dragons were *supposed* to. Nina sighed as she watched Spyro stick his head in the bowl again.

'Eh... I suppose if it wasn't for their quirks, I'd never be able to tell them apart,' she thought, rolling her eyes. *'Note to self, though; if I ever have a pair of twins again, do* not *let Flash name them.'*

"Have a nice day you two. *Oh!* And I think Hunter was looking for both of you. Better not keep him waiting!"

Both Spyros waved goodbye to their loop mother as she closed the door to the house. Not a second after the door clicked closed, though, did both Spyros glare at each other.

"Alright, who are you!? Who am I!? Who are you!?"

Both Spyros paused, having asked those questions at the exact same time. After a few awkward seconds of silence, finally one of the Spyros spoke up again. "Alright, seriously! Who are you!?"

"I'm Spyro!"

"You can't be Spyro! *I'm* Spyro!"

"How is that even possible!?"

"Beats me! Ugh, and here I thought the loop where Sparx had a second head was weird..."

"Wait, you're looping!? How!? You're just a duplicate created by this loop!"

"What do you mean I'm the duplicate!? *You're* the duplicate!"

"I can't be the duplicate! I'm this universe's Anchor!"

"Wrong-o, buddy! *I'm* this universe's Anchor!"

Both Spyros paused in their series of questions and accusations, eyeing each other oddly before they finally looked around at the scenery around them.

They appeared to be on what was a dirt road, some rather rustic looking temples and archways all over the place. Spyro quickly recognized them from the Dragon Temple, but gave the odd metallic pipes and flying metal discs in the air a confused glare. The other Spyro knew the pipes were carrying electrical currents to power the homes across the Realm, and the discs were obviously the Professor's mini-UFOs, but the temples seemed out of place. The Artisans were famous for their old world architecture, but the temples here were medieval-looking even by their standards.

Both Spyros looked at the odd world they were currently in before looking at each other, then back to the world around them. Both sighed, lowering their heads as they thought the same thing.

'This is going to be an interesting *loop...'*

"Ow! OW! UNCLE! *UNCLE!* "

"Not so mouthy now, are ya'?"

Sparx chuckled, currently holding this odd anthropomorphic dragonfly to the floor with one of his arms forcefully held behind his back. So far, this loop had been pretty weird. Currently, he was the son of two of the most uncreative dragonflies when it came to naming ever. He'd woken up with a mutant dragonfly for a brother, and apparently Spyro seemed to be in the same situation from what his 'parents' had said.

Was that why he was currently trying to break this other Sparx's arm off? No. He could deal with having a mutant Sparx for a brother. However, his constant 'witty' taunts and teasing that *he* was the weird-looking one was a completely different story.

"Sparx! Stop torturing your brother!"

"It's alright, mom! He's not torturing me!" Sparx said, a mischievous grin on his face as he looked at the door.

"Har-har! Very fun- *NY!* " the mutant Sparx said, though the other Sparx was quick to put more pressure on his arm. "C'mon, man! *I SAID* ***UNCLE!*** "

" *Spaaaarrrx!* "

"Oh, fine, fine!" Sparx said, releasing his grip on the other Sparx's arm.

The mutant Sparx was quick to fly away, ducking behind their bunk bed and poking his head out over it.

"Ha-ha!" he said, pointing to his 'brother'.

"What was that?"

"Uh, nothing! Nothing!"

Sparx smirked, crossing his arms. "I thought so."

Ember looked out the window at the new world she appeared to be in. Throughout the many loops, strange things had happened to her many times. Mostly they were minor things, though, like Dragon Village being a snowy place or the nursery having a different dragon working there. Until now, the strangest thing that had happened to her was that loop where she had replaced Spyro. Waking up in a

completely different world, however, quickly replaced that as the crowner.

Walking away from the window, she looked around her room. So far it was mostly the same in that department. From her mother coming to wake her up, she could tell her parents were the same as always, too, so that was also a relief. Flame didn't appear to be in their family for this loop, though, as when she'd asked about him, her mother had just given her a confused look. Ember frowned. Despite how he annoyed her sometimes, not having him as part of her family was a fact that had depressed her greatly.

Ember exited her room, heading down the hallway. Looking around, she noted that her house was mostly the same, though the door to Flame's room didn't have any of his usual 'style choices' hanging on it. Knowing things would reset once the loop was over, and curious to see what it was being used for now that Flame wasn't occupying it, she couldn't resist taking a tiny peek. Knocking on the door out of habit and not hearing a response, she opened it.

Oddly enough, the room still appeared to be a bedroom, albeit a *much* tidier version. There was none of the stuff that Flame liked scattered around the room anymore, and in that regard, it also meant one could *actually see the floor* for once. Everything was surprisingly neatly kept. The dressers were actually closed, the sheets and blanket for his bed were *actually on his bed,* the black dragoness that was currently on it was giving her a very odd look—

Ember paused, blinking as she finally realized the other dragon's presence. Both of them froze like deer caught in the headlights, neither saying anything. One could have cut the resulting awkwardness with a knife.

Spyro whistled. "Jeez, sounds like quite the world you come from, duplicate."

"I am *not* the duplicate."

Both Spyros walked along the path to a nearby park. They refused to let the other out of their sight until they could figure out what was going on. One of the Spyros stopped, a smirk on his face. "Sorry, duplicate, but I clearly remember my world in great detail. After several hundred loops, I have it burned into my brain so much that I doubt some loop variation could fake it."

"How can you be so sure? For all you know, that's exactly what the loop wants you to think," Spyro said, pausing as he turned with a glare to the other Spyro. "And no offense, but your 'world' sounds like something out of a youngling's story book."

"You realize I can apply the same logic to you, right? And your world sounds like every generic medieval fantasy ever. Your point?"

Spyro growled as the other Spyro put his paw to his mouth, trying to hide a devilish grin.

"Alright, now see here—!"

SHING!

"GAH!"

Spyro jumped as something popped out of the ground next to him. On instinct, he turned around and used his earth element to draw on some of the natural energy from the ground around him. A green pulse of energy shot out from his mouth at whatever had popped out of the ground. Spyro took a few seconds to catch his breath before he saw a stream of water shooting up from the ground and into the sky from the small hole he had caused. He glanced over to the other Spyro, who was still grinning devilishly.

"Dude... *Relax,* " he said, glancing at the newly created fountain. "That was a *sprinkler* . It's used for *watering grass.* " Spyro rolled his eyes. "Seriously, if you're going to freak out over every little modern thing, you're going to draw attention to yourself pretty quickly."

Spyro narrowed his eyes at the other Spyro's devious grin. From what he had told him, his world was a lot more advanced when it came to small odd contraptions used to make life easier. From what he could gather from that, this loop seemed to be a combination of both their two—apparent—worlds. Despite being here now for a good few hours, he *still* was having a hard time grasping a lot of it. Honestly, he didn't see what a dragon needed with a lot of these overly advanced things.

"Yo! Spyro!"

Both Spyros turned their head, looking over to see two Sparxs flying towards them. One of them, the one with the more anthropomorphic body, flew towards the two quicker than the other.

"Spyro! Oh man, I'll never take you for granted as a brother ever again!"

"Wrong Spyro."

Sparx paused, having already hugged one of the Spyros on the forehead. Seeing the smirk on his face, he turned to the other one.

"Spyro! I'll never take you for granted as a brother again!"

Spyro narrowed his eyes as Sparx flew to his actual adopted brother and hugged his forehead. He groaned. "Okay, this is getting confusing."

"What's confusing? I already told you, you're the duplicate."

Spyro let out an annoyed sigh as he lowered his head. The other Spyro had a devious grin on his face for the umpteenth time in a row.

"Can we forget about who's the duplicate? *Please?* "

"Fine with me. Duplicate."

Spyro face-palmed as the other Spyro chuckled deviously. So far this loop had been nothing but confusion, frustration and annoyance, all in that exact order.

"Um... So, Cynder. You're a looper too?"

Ember looked around awkwardly as she walked down the path. This 'Cynder' didn't appear to be the talkative sort. It wasn't until their 'mother' had come upstairs to tell them Hunter was looking for them that they'd actually broken the initial awkward silence. Finding out they were sisters for this loop didn't help things much. For example, despite her best attempts to make this 'Cynder' feel more welcome, she still didn't respond much unless directly asked a question of some sort. It wasn't until she had mentioned Spyro that Cynder had finally started asking questions herself.

"Y-yeah."

Cynder stayed a little behind Ember as she walked. This was the first loop things were radically different than what she had become used to, and she was having a bit of a hard time adjusting to it. What had most surprised her, though, was the fact that this dragon, who was about her and Spyro's age at the start of their loops, was a looper too. Was it even possible other dragons had survived the temple raid on the Year of the Dragon? Maybe. Even if that was the case, though, how was it she didn't recognize who she was? Considering what Malefor had made her do in the base timeline—her infamous acts as the Terror of the Skies—she thought Ember would have at least acknowledged it. Ancestors knew everyone else did. Even after she had helped Spyro save the world, *that* hadn't fully redeemed her in the eyes of some.

Yet, as she watched this pink dragoness look back at her with her blue eyes and soft smile, it was almost like, to this girl, none of that had ever happened.

"How many loops have you been through?" Ember asked, a soft smile on her face.

"Uh... Not sure. Lost count after eight hundred something."

"That long, huh? Odd that I haven't seen you yet in any of the loops I was awake for."

'That's putting it mildly.'

Cynder shook her head as Ember led the way. This loop was so confusing...

Hunter kept rereading the note he had awoken with at the start of the loop. No matter how many times he reread it, though, it still confused him greatly.

'Meet up with the Spyros, Sparxs, Ember and Cynder. I'll explain everything once you do.

- Your world's admin.'

"The Spyro *s* ? Sparx *s* ? Who the heck is Cynder? And who is this 'admin' character?" Hunter thought to himself aloud. Shaking his head, he looked off the balcony of his apartment in what was some sort of combo temple-apartment-complex medieval-themed...place. He *still* didn't quite get it.

He was curious, though. This was the first time he had ever woken up in a loop like this. Spyro had warned him that all loops wouldn't be *exactly* the same, but he didn't think they would be *this* different. And this 'admin'... Part of him was curious over who exactly this guy was, and why he thought there were apparently two Spyros and Sparxs.

Spyro had told him that usually it was best to play along until you could figure out if the events set up in the loop were going south or

not, or until you encountered another looper. Even if he were to play along with this 'admin' character, how was he even supposed to *begin* to locate them in a city as large as this?

Looking back into his apartment, he saw a megaphone on the table. He didn't know for sure, but somehow he felt like this 'admin' guy had something to do with that. Walking over, he picked it up and glanced at it. Did this admin guy really expect him to shout out at the top of his lungs to catch everyone's attention? That would likely get him kicked out of his apartment!

Then again...it wasn't really *his* apartment, either. This was just something the loop had created, and even if he got kicked out, what would it really matter? Once the loop was over with, things would just reset back to the way they always were. There wouldn't really be any consequences in the long run.

A devilish grin appeared on Hunter's face as he clutched the megaphone with both hands.

"Yo! Spyro! Sparx! Get your butts over here!"

From the park both Spyros were at, shortly after Spyro was done explaining to the other Spyro exactly what a 'streetlight' was, they looked up at the sky where the voice was calling them. Spyro's eyes went wide. Though the tone was much gruffer and had some odd accent to it that he couldn't quite place, it sounded oddly familiar. The other Spyro, however, was quick to identify it for him.

"Hunter!"

"Hunter?" the other Spyro asked, turning to the Spyro who had identified the voice. He *knew* the voice had sounded familiar, yet at the same time something about it was *off* .

"Yeah. What's wrong, *duplicate* ? Don't you have a Hunter in your supposed 'world'?" Spyro asked, a devious grin on his face.

Spyro narrowed his eyes. "Of course Hunter is in my world! I'll have you know he was a very respectful archer in his tribe! From what I heard before these loops started, he was next in line to be the leader of it!"

The other Spyro paused. Blinking several times over just how flat out *wrong* that statement was at summing up the Hunter he knew, he tried to say something in response, but no matter how many times he opened his mouth, he couldn't find any way to possibly respond to that. Before he could think of something to say, Hunter did it for him.

"OH! And Ember! You're suppose to come here too! Also, whoever this Cynder person is! I have no idea who the heck you are, but get your butt over here too!"

Had it not been for this loop being weird enough as is, the Spyro who had just described Hunter would have found it odd how Hunter didn't know who Cynder was. Before he could think about it further, he noticed the other Spyro starting to walk off in the opposite direction.

"Wha— *hey* ! Where are you going?" Spyro asked, turning around and quickly getting in front of the other Spyro. "Hunter wants us to meet him."

The other Spyro gave Spyro a flat look. "Listen, no offense, Hunter *is* one of my best friends and all...but if *Ember* is going that way, then I'm going *this* way." He pushed past Spyro as he continued to walk on by.

Spyro narrowed his eyes. "Why? Who's Ember?"

Spyro paused before he looked at Spyro out of the corner of his eye. Not a second later, a devious grin appeared on his face. Turning around, he tried his best to hide it. "Tell ya' what. Why don't you go meet her and find out? I'm sure Hunter is only expecting one set of Spyros and Sparxs, after all..."

"Now, now, Spyro," Sparx said, floating in front of him. "There's pulling pranks, and then there's just being cruel."

Spyro narrowed his eyes at Sparx, while the other Spyro just continued to look on in blank confusion.

"Hey! Shouting out of this megaphone is kind of fun! Wooooooooooooh!"

Sparx looked at the mutant Sparx hiding behind the other Spyro. That Sparx quickly ducked behind his Spyro with a shriek when he saw him turn to him. Sparx rolled his eyes.

"Ember is Spyro's, well, *my* Spyro's, number one fangirl. Pro-tip: considering you two are basically twins this loop, I would suggest avoiding her at all cost," Sparx said with a chuckle.

The other Spyro paused before narrowing his eyes at the Spyro who was attempting to walk off again. Admittedly, he didn't like the idea of having fans himself, having turned down the offer to be worshipped for many loops now. However, this other Spyro outright refusing to help Hunter because of one his fans being there still struck him as incredibly shallow. Looking back to see the look he was giving him, the other Spyro narrowed his eyes.

"Oh, don't give me that look!" Spyro said, turning around and throwing his forepaws up into the air. "You have no idea what she's like!" he said, placing his hand on his head. "'Oh, Spyro! Stop playing around! I know you really like me!' 'Oooh! That gem's pretty! I bet it would look nice on an engagement ring!' 'Ah, Spyro! You're so awesome!'" He paused. "...Okay, admittedly that last part isn't *so* bad, but still!"

The other Spyro was still unimpressed, glaring at his duplicate. Spyro groaned as he rolled his eyes.

"Fine! If you want to see it firsthand, be my guest. As for me, I'm gonna' spend the rest of this loop at Dragon Shores... If this place

even *has* a Dragon Shores."

"Hey! I think I can see Elora's house from here!"

Spyro scowled, a faint green glow illuminating from him as the other Spyro went to dart off. With a quick motion of slightly twisting his paw, the ground under the other Spyro's feet shot up and grabbed his paws.

"Wha— *HEY! What the heck!?"* the other Spyro said, the ground rising up and encasing his body in a solid rock ball.

Spyro smirked. There was a lot to learn about the more obscure powers of the earth element, but from what he learned from that loop where he had studied extensively under Terrador in the earth element, harnessing the energy of the earth was only a fraction of what could be done with it. A greater part of it actually consisted of manipulating the ground.

The other Spyro scowled, head poking out from the boulder he was encased in, glaring at his duplicate. "Let me go!" he demanded, letting out a low growl.

"Sorry, but if Hunter wants us all to be there, I think he means *everyone* . Duplicates included," Spyro said, a rare smirk on his face at getting to throw this Spyro's insult back at him.

"You know, speaking of Hunter—" the mutant Sparx started, but was quickly interrupted.

"You spin me right round, baby! Right round! Like a record goes round, round, round, round!"

"Is he *drunk* or something!?" the Sparx currently hiding behind Spyro finished, raising his head as he looked towards the source of his voice.

"I have to admit, even considering the loop variation, Hunter sounds rather *out there* this loop."

"Really? Because that sounds like the Hunter I know for sure," the Spyro encased in a boulder said. "Which means that likely *is* my Hunter, which likely means this is a variation of *my* world, which makes *you* the duplicate! HAH! *Victory is mine!* "

Spyro glanced over to the Spyro trapped in the stone with an annoyed frown, placing his paw on the boulder and rolling it over until his head was upside down.

"Hey!" the trapped Spyro said, a scowl on his face.

Spyro shook his head, grabbing the other Spyro's tail poking out from the boulder. He began dragging him to wherever Hunter was yelling from. Hopefully, once he got there, this loop would start making something resembling a lick of sense.

"HEY! The local store has a 'buy one, get two free' special on canned ham going on!"

Though, somehow, he highly doubted that.

"I BEEEEELIIIIIVE I CAN FLYYYYYYYYYY!"

Ember stood silent as she watched Hunter sing or shout any random thing that came to mind. A sheepish look on her face, she finally spoke up. "Um, Hunter. Maybe it isn't such a good idea to keep yelling like that. You might get whoever runs this place angry at you."

"Oh, c'mon. Not like it matters once the loop ends," Hunter said, turning around to look at Ember. With a smirk, he quickly headed over to her. "Go ahead, try it!"

"Uh, that's o *KAY. I'D RATHER NOT, PLEASE."*

Hunter chuckled, pulling the megaphone away from Ember's mouth and going back out onto the balcony. Ember shook her head. Looking over to Cynder, she saw her sitting in the corner of the room with eyes wide as she stared at Hunter.

"This just in! There is a car pile-up on some freeway, like, several buildings away from my apartment! I'd recommend not taking it!"

Cynder said nothing. At first she thought this Hunter was the result of the loop variation, like how there had been that one loop where Volteer had been almost meek and soft-spoken. However, when he'd started mentioning the loops and didn't seem to recognize her at all, she'd started to become a little worried. The only possible explanation she could come up with was that these loops had caused Hunter to go insane. The only bug in that theory was that, of all the times they'd encountered Hunter during the loops, he'd never once showed signs of being aware of the loop, let alone acted even *remotely* like this. She'd thought about asking Hunter when he had started looping, but so far she hadn't really had a chance to do so.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

Both Cynder and Ember turned their heads. A series of loud thumps, like someone was dragging something up the stairs, was coming from the hallway. Shortly after, the door swung open. A familiar shade of purple came walking in backwards. Finally seeing the purple dragon she hadn't seen since the loops had started, Ember's face lit up.

"Oh! Hi, Spy—!"

And that's when what Spyro was carrying came into view.

"... *ros?* "

The room went uncomfortable silent as Spyro rolled the Spyro encased in stone into view. The trapped Spyro's eyes shifted around uncomfortably, while Ember and Cynder's eyes darted between the

two Spyros in the room. From his balcony, Hunter glanced back, eyes wide at the sight. Not a second later, he went back to his megaphone.

"Evil doers beware! There are TWO Spyros here!"

Asides from Hunter's ramblings on the megaphone, the room remained silent. Cynder kept attempting to say something, but every time her mouth opened, no words found their way out before she closed it again. Meanwhile, Ember just sat wide-eyed, partially confused, partially thanking the loop gods for this variation. Finally, the Spyro who wasn't trapped spoke up.

"I'm not sure how to explain this... The simplest way I can put it: I apparently have a duplicate this loop."

"You're the duplicate!"

Despite the sudden outburst from the other Spyro, the room went silent once again.

"Watch out, folks! There are duplicates in our mist!"

Well, except for Hunter.

"If I may interject..."

Most of the beings in the room jumped at the sound of the voice. Seemingly appearing out of nowhere, a brown dragon with a yellow underbelly materialized in the room. The dragon had three blue marks on his face, one on the forehead and the other two on the very edge of his cheeks. The dragon had a droll look about him, almost like he had been forced to be there. The oddest part about this dragon was that, while most of them had frills that started from their forehead and ended down at their tail, he possessed none. Instead, he had what appeared to be black hair on his head that stuck up in a long slight curl at the front.

The group looked on in confusion at the newcomer, who glanced around the room with a lazy look about him. Finally, the Spyro trapped in the stone said what they were all thinking. "Who the heck are you?"

The dragon's face curled in annoyance. He sat down and crossed his arms. "Name's Ihy, the local admin of your two loops."

The group was silent as Ihy sat in the middle of the room. Narrowing his eyes, he scratched his head and groaned. "Geez, don't everyone speak up at once now."

While most of the group was silent, the Spyro that wasn't trapped in the rock was the first to speak up. "So, you're the guy controlling our loop?"

"More or less," Ihy said, a dull look in his eyes as he glanced blankly around the room. "For the most part, I just watch over it and make sure it doesn't go nuts during a reset. That, and make sure you behave yourselves." Ihy glared over to the Spyro trapped in the boulder.

"What?" the trapped Spyro asked in a nonchalant tone.

Ihy shook his head before looking back to the group at large. "Anyways, I'm just here because the higher-ups wanted me to hand these out."

Ihy snapped his claws, opening his sub-space pocket. Reaching in, he tossed a few books out. As they fell into a messy pile, he closed his sub-space pocket and gave the group a dull look.

"Basically, they're 'Looping for Dummies' books. Brought a few extras so you can hand them out to any future loopers in your universes," he said in a flat tone. In all honesty, he had really brought extras because he didn't want to be arsed to do this again in the 'quote-on-quote' future. "I would suggest reading chapter six several times. Loop crashes are a pain for us admins to deal with."

Though a bit reluctant at first, Ember went over to the pile and picked up a book. Opening it to chapter six, she looked at the chapter title.

'All the 'Do Not's - How to Avoid Breaking the Universe'

Ember looked up from the book and back to Ihy. The admin said nothing, just nodding his head as if to confirm that 'yes, that is actually possible to pull off.'

"So, anyways..." Ihy said, looking around. "Now that those are out of the way, you guys got any alcoholic drinks here? You have no idea how much of a pain in the arse it was to set this loop up."

"Whoa, hold on there!" the more anthropomorphic of the Sparxs said, flying out from behind Spyro and up to the admin's face. "You still have a lot of questions to answer for us, buddy! For example, why are there duplicates of us?"

"We're not the duplicates! You guys are!"

"We're *not* duplicates!"

"Shuddup, both of you!"

Ihy groaned, scratching his head. This was quickly turning into a serious pain in the arse. "I would think that'd be rather obvious."

Seeing the blank looks he was getting, he let out an irritated sigh.

"For Pete's sake, do I really have to spell it out for you guys? The reason there are two sets of Spyros and Sparxs is because there are two worlds that have you in them."

An awkward silence filled the room as the two Spyros gave each other an odd look. Ihy let out another annoyed groan. The glazed look in his eyes was all the group needed to know that he wasn't big on explanations.

"Look, it's like this. You two both know about the branches of Yggdrasil basically being alternate realities, right?"

Both Spyros gave a nod.

"Well, think of it like this. Both your worlds are on the same branch of Yggdrasil, like inches apart. Stuff like this isn't unheard of, but it's really rare. Normally, when it comes down to similar worlds, one of the beings in it who has a counterpart in a greater part of those worlds is selected. Two almost identical beings looping is an oddity, let alone being their worlds' respective anchors," Ihy said, scratching the back of his head as he glanced dully around. "That's another one of the reasons I had to come down here. The other admins felt like it would make processing this easier if heard from someone who has a good idea of what's going on."

"So why did they send you?"

Sparx laughed as the mutant Sparx looked on smugly. He had to admit, he actually *could* be pretty funny when it wasn't directed at himself.

Ihy growled, glaring at the Sparxs.

The Spyro who wasn't in the rock looked over to his mirror image before looking back at Ihy. "So, you're saying this dragon is me from another world?"

"What are you? Deaf? I just said that."

Spyro frowned, while his alternate dimensional counterpart started chuckling to himself.

"I don't know about you," the Spyro trapped in the rock said, a cheeky grin on his face, "but so far, I like our admin."

Spyro just shook his head before looking back at Ihy...to find that the dragon admin wasn't there anymore.

"Huh?" he asked, raising an eyebrow before looking around. "Where did he—?"

The sound of a can opening echoed out throughout the room, followed by the sound of a refrigerator door closing. Ihy came walking back from the kitchen, a can of beer firmly in his paw. He paused, glancing around the room as all eyes were on him.

"...What?" he asked, his expression going flat. "Not like it's going to be here after the loop ends, anyway."

The Spyro that wasn't trapped watched as Ihy quickly started downing the alcoholic beverage, an annoyed expression on his face. For someone whose job involved keeping their universes stable, he didn't exactly inspire confidence in his position. He glanced over to his Sparx, who was giving the loop admin an odd look.

"You know, speaking of that, what the heck is up with this loop?" Sparx asked, flying up next to Ihy. "I knew there would be weird loops, but this is just—"

"It's a fused loop between your two worlds, dumbass," Ihy interrupted, a flat expression on his face. "I figured that'd be obvious with the whole 'two Spyros' thing."

Spyro watched as Sparx pouted. He could hear the other Spyro and his Sparx chuckling in the background. Spyro narrowed his eyes. "Just because it was obvious is no excuse for being rude."

"Then stop asking stupid questions."

Spyro growled, watching as Ihy lazily went over to the couch and sat down. The dragon finished his can of beer and tossed it on the ground.

"Anyways, my work here is done," he said, grabbing the remote and turning on the TV. "Feel free to do whatever for the remainder of this loop."

"Wha—wait!" Spyro said, walking over to Ihy. "Shouldn't you be getting back to wherever you came from to watch over the loop?"

Ihy gave him an annoyed glance before nonchalantly waving his paw. "Eh, I'm sure it'll be fine. Besides, after the amount of crap I had to do to get rid of Malefor for this loop, I deserve a bit of a break."

Ihy sat up, giving Spyro a serious look. "Seriously. Don't expect me to do that at request. You have no idea of half the crap I needed to do to get rid of that psycho." Ihy laid back down, starting to flip through the channels. "Bleh, two thousand, five hundred lines of code, having to go *into* my terminal to make sure everything was working properly, and then the spork. A freaking *spork* of all things. I swear..."

Spyro tuned out the admin's ramblings as he looked back at the group. He saw Cynder staring awkwardly around the room. He then looked at the pink dragoness who was already looking over the book they had been given, and then to what was likely his Hunter's alternate dimensional self. The cheetah had already started to eye the megaphone again.

And then there was his alternate dimensional self. The flat expression on his face as he sat idly in the boulder was starting to rub Spyro the wrong way.

"You know, just saying, you can let me go anytime now."

"Huh? Oh, right!"

Spyro walked over to the boulder, briefly glowing green for a second before he brought his paw down on it. As the rocky chunks broke away, the now freed Spyro did a cat-like a stretch as he groaned.

"Freaking finally," he muttered before turning to Hunter. "Anyways. Hey, Hunter! You remember that one thing we had planned for a future loop?"

Hunter smirked. "You mean the thing with the Professor's mash potato cannon we asked him to make that one loop?"

"Yep!" Spyro said, a devious smirk on his face. "I still have it in my subspace pocket. Considering this place won't be here next loop, how about we pull what we had planned off this loop?"

"Heck yeah!"

Spyro felt an eye twitch coming on as he watched his alternate self pull some sort of cylinder thing out of his subspace pocket. From what he could gather, despite their similar appearances, he and this other Spyro couldn't be any more different, and from the sound of things, this Hunter was also in the same boat. Spyro face-palmed.

Somehow, he got the feeling this was going to be a *long* loop.

"Now, hold on," Spyro said, looking at his counterpart over by Hunter. "You just learned that there's a whole other world with counterparts to my...your... Whatever! What I'm trying to say is, you just learned there's an alternate universe of your own world with people you likely know in it, and your fist instinct, instead of finding out about it, is to launch *mash potatoes* at people?"

"Yeah. So?" his counterpart said nonchalantly, looking back at him. "I mean, our worlds are stuck in a time loop that occasionally fuses our worlds with other universes. Honestly, finding a universe that has a stick-in-the-mud version of myself is one of the lesser weird things that has happened to me so far."

Spyros face went flat as he face-palmed. He let out a sigh, seeing that Hunter and the other Spyro were heading towards the kitchen. *'How this dragon can be me from another world, I'll never know.'*

Spyro shook his head before heading over to the other Spyro. Just as he was about to load some potatoes into whatever that thing was, Spyro got in front of him.

"No," he said flatly.

"What?" the other Spyro asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I'm not going to have someone who is basically me from another universe launch mash potatoes at people!"

"What? Why not!?"

"Because I said so!"

"And what gives you that right!?"

"Because you're me!"

"So!? By that train of logic, I can tell you to do or not do stuff too! And I'm telling you to launch mash potatoes at people!"

"I'm not going to launch mash potatoes at people!"

"Why not!?"

"Because I actually have something called *common sense!"*

"As well as a stick up your—"

"SPYRO!"

"What!?"

Both Spyros broke out of their argument at Hunter's call. Hunter paused, scratching the back of his head.

"Uh, no, my Spyro," Hunter said before he sighed. "Okay, this is going to get confusing..."

"If I may interject again," Ihy said, poking his head over the couch. "I think I have a solution for that."

All eyes in the room were on Ihy. The admin finished off his latest can and tossed it on the floor. "Back up at Yggdrasil, we admins usually have code words we use to help differentiate between similar worlds like yours."

He pointed to one of the Spyros. "For your world, we usually refer to it as 'classic', because it was the first part of that branch of Yggdrasil."

'Classic' Spyro smirked. "A-ha! So this guy here *is* a duplicate of me!"

The unmarked Spyro frowned, giving Classic a flat glare. Ihy groaned.

"Would you knock it off with the duplicate bull—" Ihy shook his head. "Anyways, for you," he said, pointing at the unmarked Spyro. "Since your world has a more mystical, medieval vibe to it, we usually refer to it as 'Legend' or some variation of it."

'Legend' Spyro stood in indifference for a few seconds before a slight smile appeared on his face. He had to admit, he kind of liked the sound of it. Gave a rather mystical vibe to it.

"So... Now that that's taken care of... Mash potato cannon?" Hunter asked, holding the odd device up.

All it took was a glare from Legend Spyro to tell him that it wasn't going to be a thing this loop. Classic Spyro frowned, the flat glare he was giving not going unnoticed by Legend. Shaking it off, Classic smirked.

"No problem. I still have a million other ideas in my pocket space," he said, a mischievous grin on his face. "Wanna launch operation water balloon storm?"

Legend narrowed his eyes. He wasn't sure exactly what that was, but he could tell he wouldn't like it from the sound of it alone.

"No," he said flatly, getting in front of Classic.

"Oh, come on!"

"No."

"Who are you to tell me tha—?!"

Ihy groaned, laying down on the couch again. Sparx might have been Legend Spyro's adopted brother, but with how much the two Spyros seemed to bicker, it wouldn't be too far off if people mistook them for actual twins.

"Yo! I don't care what you dragons get up to this loop!" Ihy finally said, poking his head over the couch. "However, if you two are going to spend the entire time arguing, can you please kindly take it somewhere else so I can watch TV in peace?"

The two purple dragons paused, while Hunter merely scratched his head. "Isn't this technically my apartment, though?"

"Yeah, but I'm the guy who brought this place into existence in the first place. As such, I believe I get some 'admin privilege' or something like that," Ihy said flatly, laying back down on the couch.

Legend Sparx narrowed his eyes. "Somehow, I get the feeling that's not how that works."

"Eh, whatever," Classic said, nonchalantly waving his paw. "Not like we'll be spending a lot of time here anyways."

Classic Spyro started to walk towards the door. "C'mon Hunter," he said, turning back to look at the cheetah. "Let's go."

"Wait, where are you going?" Legend asked, narrowing his eyes.

"Away from you," Classic said flatly, glaring at Legend. "It's pretty clear that if I'm going to have *any* fun this loop, I need to get far away from you."

Legend groaned, a frown on his face. Classic gave a devilish grin before he started to head towards the door again. "Anyways, like I said, we're out of here—"

"Ah, Spyro!"

Classic cringed, pausing mid-stride when he heard the voice speak his name. In all the confusion and exposition, he had completely forgotten about a certain pink dragon's presence in the room. Ember had spent most of her time in the room so far looking over the book, spending a good amount of time just taking everything in. However, hearing the dragon she had been looking for the past several loops about to leave snapped her back to reality.

Running up next to Classic, she smiled. "I almost forgot. I've been looking for you. I haven't seen you since the loops started up!"

"Oh, really? How odd," Classic said, a half-hearted sheepish grin on his face.

"Yeah. I was really starting to get worried," Ember said, a soft tone to her voice. Smiling, she moved up a bit closer. "So, how have you been?"

Classic's eyes darted around as he leant back a little. He cleared his throat, noticing Ember's smile widening. "U-uh... I've been alright. Sparx and I have adapted to the loops rather well."

Legend could only watch on with blank expression. Classic kept shuffling backwards as this pink dragoness invaded his personal space. Although the dragon receiving the unwanted attention was more or less himself, he couldn't suppress a chuckle.

"That's nice to hear," Ember said, keeping uncomfortably close to Classic. "So..." her voice took on a lower tone, her blue eyes having a seductive spark to them. "Mind if I tag along with you this loop?"

"U-ummm... Sorry, Ember, but uh..." Classic muttered, his eyes darting around as he desperately tried to figure a way out of this situation. Finally, his gaze fell on his counterpart and a light bulb lit in his mind.

"I have to help this other me get adapted to this new world!"

"Wha-?"

Before Legend could say anything, Classic ran up to him and put his paw around him.

"Yeah, poor guy doesn't even have the faintest clue when it comes to technology! Did you know he blew up a sprinkler before we got here?" Classic said, a sheepish grin on his face. "Bet he would have also blown up a streetlight had it been night time!"

Legend glared at Classic, but Classic didn't care. He had found a way to get away from his number one fangirl, and he was going to do anything to take it.

Ember paused, but wasn't really deterred. "Well, I'll help. I'm actually pretty good with technology."

"Sorry, Ember, but if this guy will nuke a sprinkler because it surprised him, there's no telling *what* he'll do!"

Legend let out an annoyed groan as he glared at Classic. "Hey, now hold on a—"

"Anyways, I better go teach him how vending machines won't attempt to eat you, *see you later 'kaythanksbye!* "

"Wha— *ACK!"*

Before anyone could say another word, Classic was off with Legend in tow. Classic Sparx smirked, flying towards the door and giving the room one last wave before he left.

"Hey! Spyro, wait up!" Hunter called, running after the group.

Ember stood silent for a few seconds before her body began to droop as a frown found its way onto her face. Now safe from Classic Sparx, Legend Sparx poked his head out from behind Cynder.

"Jeez, I haven't see a dragon bolt that fast since that one loop where I dropped a giant Paper Mache spider on Cyril," Sparx said, scratching the back of his head.

Cynder was silent as she took in the scene. She wasn't entirely sure what had just happened, but now the room had pretty much emptied in a matter of seconds. She was still trying to process the whole 'other world' thing, and now lost in a new world she didn't understand, she felt a bit out of place. Shaking her head, she got up and headed for the door. She wasn't sure exactly what she was going to do, but finding Spyro, *her* Spyro, was on the top of the list.

Ember stood silent for a few seconds before she noticed Cynder exciting the room. As she excited the hall, Ember got up and quickly followed her.

"Umm... Excuse me," Ember said, catching up to her.

Cynder turned her head, a blank look on her face. Ember hunkered down a bit, her blue eyes opened wide as she had a slight frown on her face.

"Is... Is it alright if I tag along with you?" she asked, her voice soft. "I don't really know this place all that well, and everyone else who knows about the time loops have already left..."

Cynder stood silent for a few seconds, her face remaining expressionless as she stared at Ember.

"... Alright," she said, her tone of voice sounding more harsh than she had intended.

Regardless, a small smile appeared on Ember's lips as she tagged along behind Cynder.

With the room now quiet, Ihy sighed. "Thought they'd never leave..." he muttered before he began flipping through the channels.

At the very edge of the room, Sparx crossed his arms. He didn't like being left behind, but considering that other Sparx was with his brother at the moment, and Cynder also tended to be annoyed by him, he was willing to make an exception just this once. Glancing over at the electrical appliances, he raised an eyebrow.

'Wonder what these things do...'

(And after that long time it took to update, managed to get another one out relatively quickly. In my defense, I have a good part of this collab stockpiled on my computer at the moment so... yeah.

Anyways, with the whole world fusing shenanigans, I'm pretty sure we all knew this was coming eventually. Considering that, we (the writers working on this arc) decided to go all out on it and make it a full blown story arc that will be going on for a few several chapters instead of a few snippets like how most loops handle it. Really, this thing is turning out to be a fanfic in its own right, considering as of posting this we're barely one-third done writing this arc. I was considering posting some chapters with the usual looping shenanigans in between this arc, but considering a lot of the snips we've come up with while writing this reference this arc in some way, I'd rather prefer avoiding spoilers if I can. Even though that's how *most* Infinite Loop fics handle it, I'm OCD when it comes to proper continuity.

Also, as explained in the fic, Admins are the people who run the loops to make sure resets work (semi-)perfectly without any major problems. They're usually based off of mystical deities from ancient cultures. In this case, Ihy is based after the

Ancient Egyptian god of music and beer. That alone should tell you what both looping worlds are in for in the future. Don't worry though, Ihy isn't going to become a regular. One of the rules of writing an Infinite Loops fic is that the canon loopers always come first, and Admins can only appear when they're really needed for a plot point.

Going to be handling the "snippet" titling a bit different then normal for this arc. For each major part of this arc, the specific title for that part of the arc will be posted at the start of it, with each author who worked on that part being mentioned at the start. That way things don't become disjointed but pointing out which author wrote which specific part of the ship.

Anyways, looks like things have gotten off to a rocky start for both Spyros. Hopefully that doesn't have any dark consequences in the "future", so to speak...)

A Classic VS a Legend (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments below.)

Fused Loop 1.1 (continued)

A Classic VS a Legend pt. 1: (Feat: TokoWH, AbZHz101, and UkeleleNarwhal)

Legend liked to think that he was prepared for almost any experience. Even in the baseline, he had experienced some rather shocking revelations. Discovering he was a purple dragon destined to save the world, finding out that the evil dragoness that was tearing the world a new one was actually a young dragon forced into it against her will, finding out the *real* bad guy was *also* a purple dragon, and having to pull *the entire world* back together after some ancient evil tried to blow it up, to name a few.

But now, as he was dragged halfway across a town full of mechanical devices he couldn't even begin to understand, by what was basically himself with fewer brain cells and without the word 'responsibility' as part of his dictionary, he was beginning to realize that these loops had a *lot* more in store for him than he could ever even begin to imagine.

Classic continued to run, dragging Legend by his tail. He kept on running until he felt like he was far away from his 'number one fan', and even then he ran some more. Finally, close to the park where this had all started, Classic slid to a stop, letting go of Legend. Due to the momentum, Legend went tumbling. Grunting, he slowly picked himself up and glared at his Classic counterpart.

"Okay... What the heck!?" Legend yelled, moving closer to his Classic counterpart and staring him straight in the eyes.

Classic rolled his eyes, nonchalantly waving his paw. "Trust me, you'll thank me later."

"For what!? Using me as a glorified excuse to ditch one of your friends!? Separating me from the only other people I know in this loop!?"

"Hey, you don't know what Ember's like!" Classic spat, glaring at his Legend counterpart. "You may not have many fangirls in your world. Shocking, I know—" Legend Spyro growled at Classic's comment— "But let me give you a low down on what it's like. Ember's always hitting on me, and she rarely leaves me alone if I'm even *remotely* in her general area. It's so annoying!"

"So?" Legend snapped. "First; what does that have to do with me? You dragged me away from *your* problem and *my* friends. Not only that, but you ran like a coward! Second, and what makes the former even worse, is that I was under the impression that she was your friend. In other words, you just hurt her feelings for no reason other than your own cowardice! You need to grow up!"

"What did you call me!?" Classic said, puffs of smoke starting to flow out his nostrils. "I'll have you know I'm considered one of the biggest heroes in my world! I've taken down more bad guys than most of my world's elders combined!"

Classic took a few steps back, a smirk on his face as he pointed to himself. "Heck, my first adventure started when one of the bad guys of my world turned every other dragon to stone. Any other dragon would have been scared, but my first instinct was to kick the ugly butt of the guy who did this. Even when I was rescuing the other dragons, none of them stepped in to help, even the so called 'Peace Keepers' of my world. I did that all by myself and never once was I afraid, so don't you dare call me a coward!"

"I'll call you a coward and a petulant child," Legend retorted. "You think courage is just standing up when there is an obvious evil? You have a lot to learn. I too had to save my elders, masters of Fire, Ice,

Electricity, and Earth." Legend Spyro felt a twinge of pain at the thought of what Cynder had done as the 'Terror of the Skies.' But he wouldn't mention that, not to a stranger. "And do you know what? At the end of the day, that was the easy part. Do you want to know what the hard part was? Putting our lives back together, figuring out what we should do once the fight was over, learning how to trust... *That* is the courage you lack."

"Three years of war..." he continued, visibly shaking. "That is my Loop's baseline... And at the end, the world itself is destroyed and Cynder and I have to try to make it whole! In these Loops, I have lost friends and family...so many times. The hard part isn't fighting for those who remain, it's having to live with the loss of those who have moved on! How do you console a son who has lost his mother and father? A grandfather who could only watch as all his descendants were slaughtered one-by-one in front of him, and you no matter how fast you go, you can't save everyone? Only talk to me about courage once you know what empathy is and you can actually *use* it!"

Classic felt the air of confidence dissipate as he listened to Legend's words. He scowled, rolling his eyes.

'Well then, obviously you should have moved faster. If you were a real hero, none of that would have happened in the first place.' Classic thought. He was half tempted to throw that insult back in Legend's face, but something about what Legend had said kept ringing in his head. He watched as Legend glared at him, his frame shaky as he scowled. Classic stood silent before he grunted and looked away.

Why was he even caring about what this guy said? He knew he was a hero, and everyone in his world definitely knew it with how they often treated him as a celebrity. He didn't need some stiff from the Stone Ages telling him otherwise.

"Bah, whatever!" Classic said as he turned around and began to walk off. "I don't need this. I always manage to save everyone in my

world, anyways. I don't need some alternate universe me with a stick up his rear telling me how to do my job!"

"I hope you grow out of that attitude soon," Legend Spyro said just loud enough to hear. "Or one day you will wake up to one of three things: One, you will eventually face an enemy you cannot defeat on your own; two, your powers will run wild, outside of your control; three, you will find yourself painted the villain. And in every case, you will not have friends to help you...and you will fall."

Then Legend Spyro really went to dig in deep. So far this alternate version of himself seemed to be all bluster. It was time to see what teeth he had, if any.

"So that's it, then," he called out, making sure that, had anyone else been on the block, they would have easily heard what he said. "You say you're going to teach me about this world and as soon as we're alone you try to shirk your duties. You are a coward."

Classic made no response, instead just pausing in place. With what Legend had seen of this kid so far, he expected a major tantrum from his immature counterpart, so he waited for the fallout. Seconds passed as Classic said nothing. Then Classic turned on his heels, returning to his critic. With complete disregard to personal space, he stopped within one inch of Legend, maintaining a glare that burned like acid.

" *Relax.* "

"What makes y—?"

"Take a seat and *relax,* before you say something you'll regret," Classic said, his voice taking a surprisingly serious tone. "I won't complain about being called a child. We're *both* children, for your information. You, on the other hand, want to compensate for something, because you keep acting as if being a kid and enjoying life is the worst sin possible. If you want to spend your life being a bitter pussycat who complains that he can't change the past and

control everything under the sun, that's fine. I, unlike *you* , realize we're *not* the same person, and that means I can't control what you say, do, or believe. But, if you keep calling me a coward for trying to help you avoid a girl who flirts with me constantly, then perhaps you would prefer that I hurt you. *Severely.* "

With that said, Classic jumped back a few inches, sinking down to a readied stance with a smirk. "If you're stupid enough to call me a coward, then I would be more than happy to help you understand that I'm not the hero of the Dragon Realms, Avalar, and the Forgotten Realms for nothing."

Legend stood silent. Part of him noted that his behavior was far more aggressive than usual. After all that had happened to him today, it was rather understandable, but something felt... *wrong* . Regardless, after everything he put him through today, the thought of finally knocking this egotistical dragon down a peg had made him more than committed to the fight.

The biggest concern he actually had was how close Classic was. It would be difficult to react at such a short distance. And while he did have techniques that could actually, here and now, end this, he'd rather not escalate to some of his masters' greatest techniques to prove a point, nor would he willingly use Convexity before he had mastered the element.

Legend Spyro knew that he had quite a few options. He could lash out with a quick claw strike to knock the other Spyro back; at this distance, he wouldn't have time to mount a defense. He could try to evade the strike that he was sure was coming, but given how close they were, this would be...difficult. Or he could use one of his masters' greatest techniques; the Comet Dash, Snowstorm, Electric Sphere, and Earth Boulder would all be excellent options with an opponent so close... But he had sworn those off for now. Or, perhaps most reckless of all, he could try to anticipate his other's first move and counter it. It had a high chance of failure and the risk of him looking stupid if he did fail, but if he did, it would be a major victory, mentally and psychologically if not physically.

All those thoughts flashed through his head as he replied, "Mutual consent, three body-lengths?" Just in case, Spyro prepared to grab the other's horns.

"...What?" Classic asked flatly, raising an eyebrow. He quickly shook it off, though, returning back to his determined look. "Just come at me, bro! Unless you're afraid I'll take you out in one hit!"

Legend narrowed his eyes. Maybe it would be best to start off with something simple. With the minimal distance between them, Legend brought his head down and head-butted Classic in the snout, knowing there would be almost no time to react at this range. As the blow connected, Classic let out a grunt of pain as he went staggering backwards, managing to regain balance a short ways away. Rubbing his throbbing snout, he glared at Legend.

'Gotta be careful. Sparx isn't here to dull the hits for me,' Classic thought.

Over the course of the loops, Classic had been working on his one major weakness. Though he was a strong dragon in his own right, he was never really good at taking a punch. Sparx was always there to help dull the hits for him, but after a particular nasty variation loop where Sparx hadn't been with him on his baseline adventures, he knew he couldn't always rely on him. The loops where he had been training to overcome this had been painful, but worth it. Regardless, Classic knew he couldn't take too many of those. He had to admit, his counterpart knew how to put some power behind his head-butt.

Classic hunkered down, his Legend counterpart ready for whatever he would throw at him. Classic smirked.

"Nice cheap shot. What's the matter? Can't take me down without reverting to under-handed tactics like that?" Classic taunted. If there was one thing he knew full well from his loop, the most effective strategy when facing down a major enemy, and the one he was best at, was to let them attack first, dodge, then counterattack when they left themselves open.

" *I* wanted to start three body-lengths away. *You* were the one who wanted to start there and then, idiot."

"Can you blame me for wanting to give you *some* form of a handicap against me?"

Legend stood his ground. Classic was leaving himself far too open, as there were many different ways he could go about attacking him. *'What is he planning...?'* Legend narrowed his eyes. It was probably best to play it safe with something simple for now. Legend charged forward, spinning around and attempting a tail strike.

Classic smirked. *'Gotcha!'*

Classic quickly ducked under the tail, and let loose a stream of flames as Legend went to swipe at him with his claws. The stream of flames caught Legend off guard, sending him staggering a bit of the ways back. As he struggled to steady himself, Classic charged forward to keep the momentum going, nailing him square in the chest with a head-butt.

Legend grunted in pain, staggering further back. Quickly regaining ground as he dug his claws into the earth, he saw Classic standing in place, once again hunkered down with the same stupid smirk plastered across his face. Legend growled, waiting for him to attack. Seconds passed as neither dragon made a move.

"C'mon! What's the matter? Scared!?"

Puffs of smoke escaped Legend's nostrils as he bared his fangs. Once again, Classic was leaving himself wide open. *'What is he up to?'*

Legend shook his head before he took a deep breath. *'Calm down. Don't let him get to you. Remember what Terrador said. Always keep a level head during battle.'*

Legend kept a firm eye on Classic. He was waiting for him to make the first move, and so far it didn't look like there was any way he could bait Classic into attacking first. He'd left himself too open with that last attack because he let this dragon get under his scales, so he couldn't let it happen again. That attack was something meant for fighting a group of enemies, not one on one. He knew Cyril would have been disappointed in him for making that mistake had he been there.

Cyril had always been the best guardian when it came to one on one combat. *'Think, Spyro. Remember what he taught you...'*

Legend narrowed his eyes, a renewed glint of determination in them. He charged at Classic, appearing to lunge at him. Classic smirked. It seemed this guy did have a pattern to him, after all. He got ready to duck and retaliate with a burst of flames once again, but what happened next caught him off guard. Legend quickly hunkered down, spun around, and swiped at Classic's paws. Classic fell to the ground with a thud, looking up as his eyes went wide, and barely rolled out of the way in time. The ground where he once was became a small crater as Legend brought his tail encased in stone down upon it.

Getting to his feet, Classic dashed away and put some distance between them. Looking back, he saw Legend glaring at him. *'So he likes to pull fake-outs. Got it. Should be easy to find a way around that...'*

Classic looked at his Legend counterpart, watching as Legend stood his ground. *'Starting to see a few patterns here. Not enough to cheese the fight like with Ripto, but that means once I get it down, I should have this in the bag!'*

Legend narrowed his eyes. So far, all this dragon was doing was reacting to his attacks. Somehow, he got the sneaking suspicion that the fake-out tactic wasn't going to work twice. It didn't matter, though. There were still several other tactics he had planned. He opened his

mouth, a frosty mist escaping his cool breath as he shot several ice shards at his counterpart.

Classic's eyes went wide. *'Didn't know you could do that with the ice element!'*

Nonetheless, he was quick to take off, dodging left and right as ice shards flew past him. He ducked under one before firing his flames at another. They kept coming, but dodging tons of projectiles was nothing new to him. Classic smirked, slowly starting to close the gap between them.

'This is crazy...! I have to at least hand it to him. If nothing else, he's really quick!' Legend thought, keeping up the ice shard rain as Classic kept creeping closer. *'What's up with him, though? It's not like he's even trying to seriously dodge. He's just reacting to what's in front of him!'*

Classic smirked, as he was now only a short distance away. *'Alright, let's try this!'* Classic thought, jumping into the air.

Legend was caught off guard by the sudden action, cancelling his ice rain as he looked up. Classic started spinning in the air before he started falling down horns first. Legend's eyes went wide, and he quickly jumped back as Classic slammed into the ground at full force. Legend could only watch in wide-eyed confusion.

'What kind of attack was that!? That makes no sense! If anything, that'll only do more damage to him— ACK!"

Legend was sent stumbling back as a bolt of electricity connected with his chest. Through the dust cloud that was kicked up from the wild blow, Classic stood defiantly with a smirk on his face. He charged forward, keeping the momentum up by slamming Legend in the chest and sending him tumbling back.

Legend slid across the ground for a few feet before he dug his forepaws in and skidded to a stop. He glared at his counterpart,

frowning at himself for letting himself be caught off guard like that.

'Was that supposed to be a distraction? I...I'm not sure...' he thought. No sane dragon would have ever attempted such a wild display in a battle, and yet... *'That made no sense!'* Legend sighed, taking a deep breath to calm himself. *' If anything, at least that explains a lot about this dragon.'*

Legend shook his head. Glancing up, he saw Classic charging at him horns first. It didn't take him long to think of a counter. Though Classic was quick, with how blatantly he was telegraphing the move, Legend easily dodged to the side. Not wasting a minute, he began to summon the natural energies of the earth into himself and let out a green blast that sent Classic flying back.

Classic tumbled along the ground, sliding on his back. He began to pick himself up, only to see a ball of fire heading his way. Eyes wide, Classic gasped before rolling out of the way. As the fireball exploded, Classic got to his paws not a short distance away. He cringed; the blow had done more damage than he had expected. He knew he couldn't take another one of those if it hit him head on.

Legend kept a close eye on him. *'I still can't get a reading on this dragon. One second he's pulling something crazy like before, then he's wildly telegraphing his attacks... Has he had any kind of training at all?'* Legend narrowed his eyes. If things kept going this way, he might be able to end the battle quickly.

Classic took a few deep breaths. He shook his head and smirked. *'Alright! Time to get serious!'* Classic thought, a faint glow starting to illuminate around him.

Legend's eyes widened as Classic began to glow, Classic smirking as he hunkered down. *'Wha...what the heck is he up to?'*

Classic continued to grin before he took a deep breath and unleashed a mighty roar. A wave of magical energy erupted in the surrounding area, and Legend was forced to cover his ears.

Capitalizing on this, Classic charged forward and began to shoot out waves of water, dowsing Legend and the surrounding battlefield.

Legend managed to open his eyes for a second, seeing his counterpart spraying water out of his mouth. *'What the heck!? How is he doing that!? I've never seen a dragon use water as an element before!'*

Nonetheless, the water wasn't doing any damage to him, which only served to confuse him more. What exactly was this dragon's game?

"What's the matter!? Is a little bit of water all it takes to bring you down!?" Classic taunted, cancelling his water element and giving a cocky grin.

Legend growled, glaring at Classic. *'What is he up to!? Was he trying to make my fire element less effective? No...that would mean he'd be de-powering his own fire element!'*

Legend scowled before firing another rain of ice shards towards Classic.

Classic smirked, jumping to the left. "Missed me!" Classic ducked under another shard. "Ooh, so close!" Grinning, he then jumped over a sudden surge of ice shards. "Oops, sorry, try again!"

Legend growled, fangs bared as he watched Classic easily weave in and out of the last few ice shards heading his way. *'Alright then, let's see how you like being trapped again!'*

Legend began to glow green and the earth started to shake beneath his paws. Classic smirked, jumping to the side as the ground shot up into a ball not a second later. Landing on the ground, Classic began to jump back and forth, the cocky grin never leaving his face.

"Fool me once, shame on you! Fool me twice, shame on me!" Classic taunted before he took in a deep breath.

Legend began to brace himself for whatever Classic was about to throw at him, raising a wing in front of him as he got prepared to jump out of the way. However, what happened next caught the purple dragon completely off guard.

"Wha...?"

Legend looked around him, a cloud of bubbles surrounding him. He stood completely wide-eyed and speechless before he looked at his Classic counterpart.

Classic smirked. "C'mon, now! I didn't want to completely decimate you!"

Legend growled, glaring coldly at his counterpart. "That overconfidence will be your downfall."

"Oh really?" Classic asked sarcastically, narrowing his eyes. "Wouldn't you have to hit me first for that to happen?"

Legend shook his head, teeth still bared as he closed his eyes. *'Okay, calm down...calm down...! You're letting this annoying little lizard get under your scales again.'* Legend took a deep breath before he starting glaring at his counterpart again. *'He has a point, though... I can't catch him with my earth element like last time, and the other elements are too slow... Except...'* He watched as his counterpart stuck his tongue out and wiggled his claws at him, causing Legend to growl. *'Okay, **that's it!** Let's see if he's quick enough to avoid having a lightning bolt shoved up his—'*

Legend opened his mouth, crackling electrical energy forming at the back of his throat, glaring daggers at his counterpart. This loop had been an absolute pain for him, from the second he'd woken up to this very moment. Now, all he wanted to do was to finally knock the main source of his frustration down a peg. The dragon that had such blatant disregard around him, the dragon who had separated him from his friends, and the dragon who didn't deserve the purple scales he was born with! Now, it was time to finally, *finally*—

'Wait, why is he grinning...?'

Legend shot out a bolt of electricity at Classic, who in return...just stood there, grinning like a cocky idiot. The bolt shot towards the veil of bubbles that Classic had put up, but instead of easily popping through it like he had thought, the lightning hit the bubbles...then stopped. Electrical sparks began to form around them.

'What...? How is that even...!?'

"You know, as much as I used to complain about how useless the bubble element was in my baseline," Classic said, crossing his forepaws, "after having gone through an entire loop using just that element alone, you'd be surprised at the number of uses it has. Especially after you use some magic to reinforce them a little." Classic smirked before pointing one of his claws towards the ground.

"By the way, look down!"

Legend raised an eyebrow, unsure if Classic was trying to pull something. Cautiously, he did so. *'I don't get it... What is he getting at? All I see is the damp—* ***oh cr—!'***

Before Legend could finish that thought, the electricity that was stored up in the bubbles shot towards the ground, still wet from earlier. Legend shrieked as electricity coursed through his body, the attack lasting a good few seconds before the bubbles finally popped. Legend nearly fell to the ground, only barely managing to stand as he panted heavily.

Classic smirked. True, he could have just used his own electric element to pull this off, but seeing Legend's own attack turned back on him was just so much more satisfying. For all of Legend's supposed skills, he was no different from most of the people he'd faced. Get under their scales, skin, or whatever, and they'd start to make mistakes like no one's business.

Legend slowly raised his head, growling as he watched his counterpart sitting with a smug look. *'How can I be so idiotic!? I let him turn one of my attacks against me! I can only imagine what one of the guardians would say if they were here!'*

"C'mon! I thought you come from a world that's in the middle of a war! You're making this way too easy on me!"

Legend dug his paws into the ground as he growled, fangs bared as smoke escaped from his nostrils. *'Why... Why this...this little...!'*

'Calm down.'

Legend blinked, a bit surprised by the familiar voice ringing in his head. *'Terrador!'*

'You have to stay calm in battle, no matter who it is you're facing.'

Legend closed his eyes, memories suddenly rushing back. He wasn't sure what had brought it on, but somehow, just listening to the words of one of his teachers managed to let some of the rage he held towards his counterpart subside.

"Uh... Hello?"

It was an earlier loop when he'd heard those words, back when he'd first started looping. Through the amount of time he'd spent in those loops, his abilities with the four elements had improved through sheer repetition and never failed to impress the elders. It was one time when he was doing his obligatory training session with Terrador, the loop after Cynder began looping.

'I know you want to end this war, Spyro, we all do. But you can't let your emotions get the best of you, especially on the battlefield.'

"Hey! I'm still here, you know!"

He remembered the rage he'd felt after that, about how the loops were making them relive these horrid memories over and over. He

remembered how he took it all out on the enemies that were unlucky enough to cross his path, how he ripped apart the training dummies, how the guardians watched on in shock.

"Oh, come on! Don't tell me I broke you already!"

'No matter who it is you face, no matter how hard things may get, you cannot lose yourself. If you lose yourself, you lose control of the battle. If you lose control of the battle, you lose everything.'

Legend took a deep breath. Classic glared at him, scratching the back of his head.

'Maybe I did *break him...?'* Classic thought, though he was quick to smirk. *'Well then, I guess this counts as a victory for me, then!'*

'You already appear to be well skilled in the earth element, but as long as you fight with rage, you can never fully master it. You must always fight with a level head, unmoving like the earth under your paws. Once you have learned that...'

Legend opened his eyes, the rage that was once in them now subsided.

'...come speak to me. I have something to teach you that may one day help you turn the tide of battle.'

Now it was Legend's turn to crack a grin. *'You know what, Terrador? I think you may have been right.'*

Classic watched as Legend got a new air of determination about him. Classic smirked. Part of him was actually pretty excited to see his Legend counterpart hadn't given up already. That would just make finally beating him all the more sweet.

"I see you're ready for round two," Classic taunted, hunkering down. "Well, bring it on! Doesn't matter how many times you try, I'll always come out on top!"

Legend said nothing, his paws planted firmly on the ground as he began to concentrate. *'I'm not going to let you get to me anymore. In fact, I think it's time I turned the tables!'*

With that, Legend closed his eyes and began to glow a faint green. Seeing this, Classic smirked.

"I already told you! That ain't going to work anymore!" he taunted, getting ready to jump out of the way.

Legend opened his eyes, a smirk on his face. "What makes you think that's what I'm up to?"

Classic's face went blank at his counterpart's words, but he wasn't allowed to think on it for long as the ground around them started to shake. Classic braced himself, getting ready to bolt at a moment's notice. However, as a stone pillar sprung up not far away, Classic's eyes widened in confusion. Before he could figure out what was happening, several more pillars began to pop up out of the ground. Classic's head darted around as pillars kept being summoned forth with no regard for his position.

'What the heck? Maybe I really did *break him...'* he thought, but he didn't get to think for long as the ground below him began to shake.

Reacting at a moment's notice, Classic jumped to the side to avoid being thrown into the air by the pillar. Looking around, he noticed he was in what now appeared to be a maze of pillars. He glanced around, eyes wide as he tried to piece together what his counterpart was up to.

"Your aim's slipping!" Classic taunted, looking around for where his counterpart was. "Out of all those pillars, not one hit me!"

"Who says I was aiming for you?"

Classic spun around towards the source of the voice, eyes narrowing as he was only met with more pillars. Before he knew it, he heard a

whistling sound coming from behind him. Looking back, he gasped as he saw a large fireball heading his way. Classic darted off, avoiding the blast when the fireball hit the ground. However, in his haste, he ended up grazing the side of one of the pillars, sending him stumbling over himself.

Picking himself up, he frowned. "What's the matter!? Too afraid to fight me face to face!?"

"Depends. Are you?"

Classic turned around, only to be met with a face full of ice. Classic went tumbling back, slamming into a pillar. Gasping for air after having the wind knocked out of him, he got up in a daze, shaking his head as he tried to steady himself. Looking up, he saw his counterpart standing there, the tip of his tail encased in a ball of ice.

Classic frowned before he let out a bolt of electricity at his counterpart. Legend was quick to sidestep behind a pillar, the bolt flying past it and hitting the pillar beyond that. Classic growled before charging forward to where Legend was. He stopped by the pillar, getting ready to let loose a wave of flames. However, his counterpart was nowhere to be seen.

"Wha—where did he— *AAH!* "

Classic barely had time to react when he saw an ice shard heading his way. He ducked and rolled, and was met with a pillar to the side. He groaned as the ice shards flew over him, before he picked himself up, trying to ignore his throbbing side.

"Not so fun when your hit and run tactics are turned against you, huh?"

Classic growled, looking around for his counterpart. For as far as the eye could see were nothing but pillars obstructing his view. *'I don't get it! How is he able to move around in this mess!?'*

Before Classic could ponder the thought further, the ground under his feet started to crack. It didn't take long for Classic to realize he needed to move. He jumped forward, scraping his side against a pillar as he did. Legend popped out of the ground not a second later, turning to his counterpart and getting ready to unleash a wave of flames. Classic cringed, forcing himself to move despite the scrapes he had taken, the wave of fire missing him by inches. Looking back, he saw his counterpart disappear behind the pillars yet again.

Classic shook his head, his breathing becoming heavy. *'Oh crap... I'm starting to get flashbacks to that loop with the no-faced freak!'* He shook his head before he started looking around. *'Okay, calm down. There has to be a way out of this!'*

Classic hunkered down, looking around for anything that might hint to a way out. He started to shake as he could only see pillars upon pillars, not a hint of any way to escape. It was then he started to see a faint glow beyond a path. *'That's it! A way ou—* ***oh no!*** *'*

Classic ducked, barely avoiding being hit with a lightning bolt. He picked himself up, starting to shake as he rapidly looked around for an escape route. *'Oh crap! I don't even know if I'm in the same place as when this started anymore!'*

From behind one of the pillars not so far away, Legend looked on with a grin.

'The earth arena trap is a very powerful yet difficult ability to master. It takes most earth dragons many years before they can properly navigate it. Once mastered, though, it becomes a very useful technique when up against quick enemies. The maze gives them very little room to move, and disorients them greatly. With this, it becomes easy for one to turn the tides of battle.'

'Thank you, Terrador.' Legend thought. He doubted Terrador ever saw this situation coming back then, or the fact that the time loop gave him more than enough time to master it, but nonetheless, one

of his mentors had once again managed to help him in his time of need.

Classic darted down and around sets of pillars as he attempted to find a way out, narrowly dodging blasts of fire, ice, and electricity as he did. He could feel beads of sweat starting to form on his forehead, each dodge causing him to bump and scrape himself against a pillar. He knew he couldn't take much more of this. He needed a way to turn this around and fast.

'Come on, Spyro! Think! You've been through worse than this!' Classic thought to himself, looking around for any sign of his counterpart.

The surrounding area was eerily quiet; not a single echo of footprints could be heard. *'How can he be so bulky, yet light on his feet!?'* Classic shook his head, concentrating harder. No matter how hard he tried, though, the only thing that could be heard was the wind.

'Wind... Wait, maybe I can use my wind element to increase my speed, like air flowing through a cave tunnel! No, I'll just end up slamming into a pillar if I try that,' Classic thought, head darting back and forth. *'Wait... Slamming into a pillar... That's it!'*

Classic heard a whistling sound, which was more than enough of a signal to start running. Barely avoiding a blast of fire, Classic ducked behind a pillar. Making sure he was safe, he opened his subspace pocket and reached his paw in. *'C'mon, where is it...where is it... Got it!'*

Smirking, Classic pulled out a blue orb. *'Time to topple this place down like a set of dominos!'*

Not far away, Legend swerved in and out of the pillars as he quickly made his way towards his counterpart. He made sure to tread as lightly as possibly, a feat that was made easier through delicate manipulation of his earth element. *'I'm going to have to remember to thank Terrador after this. Even if he doesn't remember.'*

As he finished that thought, a loud crash rang throughout the pillars, quickly followed by the sound of several more crashes, like the sound of a landslide. Legend barely had time to wonder what was going on before he was almost rammed by a purple blur. The blur smashed through pillar after pillar as it went on a warpath. Legend's mouth hung open and his eyes went wide as large chunks of rock started to fall down around him. He spread his wings, flying to the side to avoid being crushed, before darting up through the pillars and into the air. Looking down, he saw what could only be described as absolute chaos. Dust, large chucks of rock, and a purple blur went every which way as what sounded like a explosion rang throughout the town.

As the dust started to clear, what was once a peaceful park now looked like a warzone. On top of the rocks, Classic stood triumphantly with a cocky grin on his face. Legend looked on wide-eyed, trying to piece together what happened.

'But...how!? From what I've seen, he's done nothing that implies he even knows earth is an element. If he did know, he would have broken out of my earth trap earlier!'

Classic looked up at Legend's dumbfounded face and had to fight the urge to laugh. He sat down, crossing his front legs. "I have to hand it to you, duplicate. I didn't think you'd force me to use stuff in my pocket space."

Legend narrowed his eyes. "I thought this was supposed to be a fair fight!"

"Hey, you never said anything about using what we have in our subspace pockets!"

Legend growled. *'Alright, then. Just remember, you asked for it!'*

Legend searched the back of his mind, subconsciously dipping into his subspace pocket. Over the course of the loops, it had expanded enough that he could now hold all three of the armors he'd found

during the tail end of his adventure. If Classic was going to use what he had in his subspace pocket, then so was he. But which armor to go with; that was the question.

The fury armor, though incredibly powerful, would drain him too quickly of his energies, on top of being a bit of an overkill. The silver armor also increased his abilities, though nowhere near the same extent as the fury armor, but didn't have the draining effect. However, both of these armors still shared the same problem of actually having to hit the target in order for them to be of any use, and with how quick Classic had been and how he'd managed to turn one of his attacks back on him...

'Alright, then, let's see how he likes this!'

Legend grinned as a faint glow started to surround him. Classic raised an eyebrow. Not a second later, Legend found himself clad in golden armor, a faint yellow glow around him. Classic narrowed his eyes.

"Heh, do you really think some cruddy Stone-Aged armor is going to help you?" Classic taunted, a cocky grin on his face.

"Why don't you try it and find out!" Legend spat back, hovering still in the air.

Classic huffed, wondering exactly why Legend was leaving himself open like this. He shook his head. *'Whatever. If he's going to leave himself open, I'm sure as heck going to take it!'*

With that thought in mind, Classic dipped back into his subspace pocket. It was time to show him just how effective such cruddy armor would be against what he had in store. He summoned one of the mini-missiles he had collected and popped it into existence inside his mouth. Igniting the fuse, he spat the projectile towards his counterpart. With how fast the projectile was going, Legend didn't have time to dodge, but then again, he wasn't trying to.

The explosion rang out and a cloud of smoke expanded as the missile hit Legend full-force. Classic smirked. *'Bullseye!'*

However, as the smoke began to clear, the smirk on Classic's face quickly disappeared. There was his counterpart, still hovering in the air, no worse for wear. Classic's mouth dropped, his eyes going wide. *'Huh!? B-but how!?'*

Legend grinned. In truth, right now, his ears were ringing like crazy and his body was screaming out in agony, but thanks to his armor he was hiding it well. While the other two armors were for attacking, the golden armor was enchanted for armor's intended purpose. Not only did it dull hits, but with this on, he never once flinched. True, he probably still couldn't take many more of whatever his counterpart had thrown at him, but seeing the horrified look on his normally smug face had made this demonstration more than worth it.

"Alright, *duplicate!* " Legend said, getting a small amount of joy at tossing Classic's favorite insult back at him. "You ready for round two?"

(I get the feeling there's going to be a lot of Legend Spyro bias with this current arc... I suppose it's to be expected though. lol /shot

Anyways, his the first part of one third of the this arc starting. We actually put a lot of thought and care into this battle, taking in account both Spyros strengths and weaknesses. Seriously, we went into some Death Battle levels of analysis here.

We were all actually rather surprised at how well Classic was holding up, to be honest. We all pretty much expected him to get flatten by Legend, but he actually managed to push him back and have him on the ropes for a good portion of this chapter. I suppose it's only natural we'd assume that. When most people think Classic Spyro, they just see breathing short burst of flame and ramming things with his horns. In actuality

though, Classic has a surprising collection of abilities and skills he's built up over the course of the original series. Elements and Magic are just the tip of the ice berg, really. Not even counting those, he still has a plethora of items he has in his subspace from his adventures. Mini-missiles, power-up orbs, vehicles like his Mini-UFO... Really, if you can think of it, Classic likely has it in his subspace.

Plus there's his speed advantage over Legend, which is what manages to give him a pretty big edge over his counterpart for most of the battle so far sense Legend is more about getting into his opponents face and smashing away instead of hit and run tactics. Classic is also much more creative with his abilities. What Legend would just see as useless bubbles, Classic would see as pyro bubble bombs. /shot

That's not to say Legend is out matched by any means, no. Though his skills aren't as diverse as Legend's, his abilities still give him quite the edge in that they pack far more of punch than Classic's and he can take a lot more hits than his counterpart. On top of that, Legend also has his collection of armor. Specifically, he's using his golden armor from DotD. The golden set armor in that game was a massive defense booster, allowing for him to shrug off hits like they were lite finger pokes. He also has proper combat training, something Classic himself does have in the form of Dragon Kata, but rarely uses. On top of that, Legend has some other darker abilities at his disposal as well...

Exactly who will win this battle though? Well, you just have to keep reading to find out...)

A Classic VS a Legend pt 2 (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments below.)

(Fused Loop 1.1 continued)

A Classic VS a Legend pt. 2: (Feat: TokoWH, AbZHz101, and UkeleleNarwhal)

Meanwhile, earlier that day...

Ember walked along the path, the awkward silence not once breaking since she had left the apartment. It all had happened so fast, everyone piling out of the building like Gnasty was turning the dragons all to stone again for the thousandth time in a row. She sighed, feeling responsible. She wished she knew why her Spyro avoided her. She couldn't help it if she was the type to let her emotions get the better of her.

Shaking her head, she knew there was no use dwelling on it. For now, the best she could do was wait and hope they'd run into them again. She looked forward. The black dragoness in front of her was glancing around every which way with eyes wide. Cynder hadn't said a single thing since they'd left the apartment, and it was starting to unnerve Ember. She'd wanted to tag along because she didn't like the idea of being alone in a new city they'd never been to before, but with how little Cynder spoke it might as well have been like that anyway.

Cynder's eyes were wide as she looked around at her surroundings. Some sort of flying circular wagons flew overhead, and several people walked by, some of them either talking or repeatedly tapping on small metal devices. Cynder didn't quite understand what form of magic was being used to make such things, nor could she even begin to understand what such things *were* to begin with, but something about them just felt unnatural. She shivered. Not many

things could make her feel any more out of place than she usually felt in the baseline, but all these odd *things* that she couldn't even begin to understand were giving that a good run for its money.

"So..." Ember muttered, in hopes of quelling the awkward air between them. "You're from another world?"

Cynder glanced back with an indifferent look. Ember mentally kicked herself for asking such an obvious question, but at least getting the opportunity to learn about the only other awake dragoness with her at the moment was better than following her around blindly just because.

"...Yes," Cynder said. Admittedly, her words came out much colder than she had intended.

"Cool," Ember said, though she flinched at such a simplistic response. Another silence was quickly starting to follow, but Ember was determined not to let that happen. "So, um... What's your world like?"

"What?"

Cynder froze, looking back with a slight apprehensive expression. Luckily for her, Ember didn't seem to notice.

"Well, that guy that called us here said we're both from different worlds. Hunter told me of the possibility of visiting other worlds in the loops, so I was just wondering..."

Cynder forced a smile, despite the internal struggle she was dealing with. She had almost forgotten about the whole 'other alternative world' thing. The question had seemed so innocent, but with how her world's baseline went, especially for her...

"Uh, well... We certainly don't have such odd gadgets in our world," Cynder said, looking up towards one of the mini-UFOs above.

"Really?" asked Ember, tilting her head. "Odd. Our world has a lot of different kinds of technology in it. Some of it's kind of cool, a lot of it is useful...though trying to understand a lot of the smaller details of how most of this stuff work is confusing."

'That's for sure,' Cynder thought, taking a glance around at all the odd gadgets that most people wouldn't have given a second thought.

"What else is it like? Do you have portal systems in your world that take you to other realms?" Ember asked, though judging by the fact that Cynder looked at her like she had grown a second head, she was going to take that as a no. "Portal systems are really useful. They let you travel long distances in almost no time at all. I've actually been spending a lot of my loop time trying to see if I can convince the elders to set up a portal up between my village and the Artisan realm."

"Artisan?"

"Yeah. They house one of the five main dragon classes."

Once again, Cynder looked at her like she had grown a second head. Ember chuckled, shaking her head.

"There are five different kinds of dragons in my world, named after what they're good at. Artisans are the architects, Peace Keepers make sure nothing bad happens in the realms, though honestly, they're not very good at that job," Ember chuckled, rolling her eyes. "Magic Crafters are the ones who keep the magical balance in our world, as well as experiment with new spells and the like, Beast Makers create most of the creatures in our world, and Dream Weavers are responsible for making sure no dragon or living being has nightmares when they sleep."

Cynder listened to the somewhat long-winded explanation with eyes wide. "Sounds...interesting."

"What? Aren't the dragons of your world like that?" Ember asked, tilting her head.

"Not really. Mostly, dragons of my world are usually identified by their element."

"Element? Don't the dragons of your world breathe fire like most dragons?"

"Some do, but not all. You see—"

Before Cynder could go on her own long-winded speech about the dragons of her world, she was interrupted by a low grumbling sound. Cynder blushed, grabbing her stomach. Ember giggled.

"Almost forgot. With everything that's going on, we kind of *did* miss breakfast," she said, a slight smile on her face. "C'mon. I'm not sure if it's still here this loop, but I know of this great place to eat. If we can find it, we should continue this conversation there."

Cynder nodded, watching as Ember took the lead with a smile on her face. She was quick to follow behind, a bit surprised to find that she herself was smiling too. She wasn't entirely sure why, but despite being in a completely different world away from her Spyro, she didn't feel all that alone anymore...

Meanwhile, miles away...

Hunter bent over, taking deep breaths. If there was one thing he knew for certain about Spyro, it was that he was *fast* . Even carrying another dragon roughly his size, Hunter couldn't even begin to keep up with him. He glanced up to find Sparx looking at him with a cheeky smirk.

"I thought cheetahs were supposed to be fast?"

"Shut up," Hunter said flatly before he bent back up and stretched his back. "And what about you? Don't you usually keep up with Spyro?

"I just wanted to make sure you weren't going to have a heart attack," Sparx said, a cheeky grin appearing on his face. "Anyways, c'mon. I saw them head this way!"

With that, Sparx went to dart off down an alleyway. Hunter raised an eyebrow before quickly raising his hand.

"Whoa! Hold up! They didn't go that way!" he said before pointing in the opposite direction. "They went that way!"

"No they didn't! I saw them go *that* way!"

"Well, then you saw wrong, because I *know* they went that way!"

They paused, glaring at each other. Hunter smirked. "Rock, paper, scissors? Winner gets to choose which way we go?"

"You're on!"

They raised dominate hands, cupped into a fist. Hunter grinned. "You're going down, bug boy!"

"We'll see about that, lead shoes!"

"Rock, paper, scissors!"

Both Hunter and Sparx shook their fists and laid their palms out flat. Sparx frowned. "Draw. Now what?"

"What else? We go again!"

Sparx frowned before raising his fist again. Somehow, he got a bad feeling about this.

"Rock, paper, scissors!"

Both combatants kept their fists cupped as silence fell over them. Sparx's face went flat. "Draw... Again."

"Well, then we'll just do it again."

"Why don't we just flip a coin instead?"

Hunter smirked, a snarky glint in his eyes. "What's the matter, bug boy? Afraid you'll lose?"

Sparx scowled. After several seconds, he slowly raised his fist.

"Rock, paper..."

Meanwhile, miles away...

This was odd. It wasn't by far the oddest thing Cynder had experienced today, but it was still odd.

Ember had taken her to something called a 'Cafe'. Apparently, it was a place that served various drinks and variations of bread-based products. Cynder didn't quite get it, though, granted, the closest thing she had in her world was the market place where most dragons went when they didn't feel like hunting their own food. She also didn't quite understand why Ember had taken her to a place that made bread-based products. Bread was hardly something dragons ate regularly.

'You'll love it here! They have a lot of great tasting stuff here!'

Cynder mentally shrugged. *'Might as well go along with it. Not like I know much about how this world works, anyway.'*

Ember smiled. Currently, the two dragons were sitting at one of the tables outside the establishment. Cynder found sitting in the chair rather awkward, yet Ember took to it with no problem. Cynder mentally sighed. Yet another thing that made her feel out of place.

"So, what was that you were talking about earlier? About dragons of your world being defined by their element?"

Cynder raised her head at Ember's question. "Oh, right," she said, remembering what Ember had asked earlier. "In my world, dragons are divided up into elements, the four most common ones being fire, ice, electric, and earth."

"Cool. That sounds like it would be awesome. As I said, most of the dragons in my world only breathe fire," Ember said before she glanced away and began to gaze off into space. "Well, except for Spyro..."

Cynder raised an eyebrow as Ember's voice became more light and she started to space out. "...I wouldn't be surprised. In my world, purple dragons have the ability to use many different elements, some of which most dragons didn't even know existed."

"That sounds cool. I bet Spyro already knows all of them..."

Cynder was silent, her expression blank as she looked at the pink dragoness in front of her gazing off into space with a content smile on her face. It didn't take a genius to come to the obvious conclusion.

"I take you like your world's Spyro?"

"Oh, yes! Very, very much!" Ember said, a wide grin on her face. "Everything about him is awesome! The way he kicks the behinds of all our realm's bad guys, the way he never gives up no matter what's thrown at him, how he always has a comeback to any taunt thrown at him, the confident grin..."

Cynder glanced away, clearing her throat as Ember began to list off things that made her fall head-over-heels for her hero. Cynder felt rather uneasy, beginning to wonder if this dragoness had a personal list written down or something. Finally, Ember paused and sighed as her head went limp.

"I don't think he really cares for me, though. Every time I talk to him, he usually makes an excuse and leaves."

Cynders thoughts were quickly thrown back to the apartment, with how the other Spyro had barrelled out of the building with her Spyro in tow.

"Well, in his defence, you did appear to be making him uneasy with how close you were getting," Cynder said bluntly. *'Then again, I can't really say much. The closest thing I know about dragon courtship is that surviving an apocalypse is apparently a good jump-starter...'*

Embers head hung lower at Cynder's words. Noticing this, Cynder frowned and looked away.

"Oh, uh... I didn't mean it that way. What I was trying to say was, uh..." Cynder fumbled over her words. She mentally sighed. *'Great. Way to put your hind leg in your mouth, Cynder. I can't help it if Spyro's the only other dragon around my age I've ever talked to before...'*

"It's alright," Ember said, looking back up with a soft smile. "I know I tend to go a bit 'out there' when I'm close to Spyro, but I can't really help it. When I'm near him, it's like all common sense I have goes flying out the window, you know?"

"Not really."

"Oh..."

Once again, Cynder found herself mentally kicking herself as Ember glanced away with a barely visible blush on her cheeks. Cursing herself for being so blunt, she lowered her head.

"I'm sorry," Cynder said, glancing away. "I'm... I'm not exactly used to this."

"Used to what?" Ember asked, looking back at her as she tilted her head.

"This," she said before shaking her head. "I mean, talking with others around my age."

"Why?"

Cynder paused, glancing away. "Let's just say...I don't really get to meet many dragons around my age in my world."

"Oh," Ember said, pausing as she straightened herself in her chair. "Why?"

Cynder froze. Her mind raced to come up with an answer that didn't involve the egg genocide at the temple. She glanced down.

"Um, well..." Cynder shuddered, glancing away. "Something... something happened during the year of the dragon that resulted in most of the eggs being scattered throughout our world. It's incredibly rare for young dragons to encounter someone around their age."

"Really? That's odd," Ember said before giving a soft smile. "My world had something similar happen to it."

At this, Cynder raised her head as she looked at Ember.

"It was on last... or rather, this... whatever, it's caught in the loop so it's a bit hard to place down when it happened." Ember said, shaking her head. "What I'm trying to say though, was that during that year of the dragon a Sorceress descended on the Dragon Realms and stole all the dragon eggs, scattering them a crossed the Forgotten Realms."

"That's terrible," Cynder said, placing her paw in front of her mouth. "Why would she do that?"

"She wanted to tear off their wings for an immortality spell," Ember said, scowling at the thought. "She was a truly horrible being for

wanting to do that. Luckily though, my Spyro managed to rescue them all in time before anything serious happened." she said, her expression brightening as she gave a smile."

"That's good."

"Yeah..."

A silence followed shortly after Ember stopped speaking. Cynder cleared her throat, looking around. It wasn't long before a cheetah made his way over to their table, setting down a tray with an assortment of pastries. Cynder narrowed her eyes curiously at them. Considering she didn't even know what a cafe was to begin with, she had let Ember do the ordering for them.

"Try one. They're really good!"

Cynder watched as Ember picked up one of the pastries and began to eat. Cynder went back to looking at the display in front of her. She still didn't quite get why dragons of this world ate wheat-based foods to begin with, but her growling stomach didn't really care much. With a delicate, if somewhat apprehensive gesture, she picked up a rounded pastry that appeared to have some sort of glaze on it and brought to her mouth. Biting in, the sweet sensation filled her mouth as a hint of cherry started to mix in. She looked down to see some sort of jelly in the center of the pastry. She paused before swallowing. She had to admit, it actually was pretty good.

'I think I'm starting to get why dragons eat bread in this world...'

Ember smiled, giggling slightly as she watched Cynder try the new food. A thought occurred to her.

"Well," Ember began. "I told you about my Spyro, so what about yours?"

Cynder balked, unsure of exactly what the pink dragoness wanted. A comparison between the two Spyros?

"I mean, you should know him pretty well. Isn't that how most Loopers start, by having a tie to their Anchor?"

Still nervous, but calming down, Cynder considered the question. "We're pretty close," Cynder conceded, not wanting to seem like she was flaunting anything in the other dragoness's face. "We have each other's back no matter what."

"Really?" Ember prompted excitedly. "How did you do that?"

Cynder hung her head as she answered. "We both saw the worst in each other and didn't let go."

"Really? What happened?"

Cynder froze, glancing away as she bit her lip. "I...I'd rather not talk about it. It's a *long* story..."

"Oh... Alright then," Ember said, glancing down.

Seeing the distress she had caused Cynder, Ember figured it best not to press the subject any further. A silence soon followed as Ember tried to think of a way to hopefully change the subject and clear the air. Finally, a thought occurred to her and she looked back up with a smile.

"So, what element are you?"

"Hm?" Cynder looked up from her food to see Ember staring at her.

"What's your element?" Ember asked again. "You said your world has many different elements a dragon can use. Since I told you how nearly all dragons in my world are fire dragons, I think it's fairly obvious what element I am. I was just curious though what yours was."

Cynder paused, unsure how to respond. She wasn't like most dragons, after all, what with how things in the baseline went for her. She didn't really know what her natural element was, thanks to her

forced affinity with darkness. The most 'normal' element she could use was wind, and even then...

Seeing Ember waiting for a response, though, she had no choice but to wing it.

"Well, I guess it would be wind..."

"You guess?" Ember asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Yeah. It's a bit... *complicated.* " Cynder said, looking back down at her pastry. "In my world, no one is sure if wind is its own element or an extension of earth. I've seen several earth dragons manage to manipulate the wind, yet it's not to the same extent I can."

"Usually, they can only kick up tiny whirlwinds, yet I can do much more than that. I can create mighty gusts of wind to blow enemies away, use the wind to fly faster than most dragons, and even turn myself into a mini-tornado by circling the air around me," she continued. "Plus, there's also the fact that I've never moved the ground before. Granted, it never really crossed my mind to try..."

"Well, then maybe its something you should try in the future," Ember said, giving a soft smile. "You don't know until you try. Even if you can control wind better, you said that earth dragons can also control the wind. Maybe you're just more specialized in wind than most earth dragons."

"Maybe," Cynder said, looking back at Ember.

Cynder paused before taking another bite of her pastry. Now she was actually rather curious herself. Even if she couldn't move earth or wasn't a pure earth dragon, what was her natural element? Could she still even access it after being touched by the darkness? She wasn't really sure. If nothing else, it at least gave her something new to do in the looping future.

"You know what, Cynder?"

Cynder raised her head, looking at Ember, who had a big grin on her face.

"I'm really enjoying having you as my sister for this loop."

Cynder paused. A few seconds later, a soft smile appeared on her face.

The tranquil scene didn't last for long, however, as a loud crashing sound rang throughout the city. Ember jumped, nearly falling out of her chair in the process. Cynder raised her head, noticing a cloud of dust kicking up somewhere in the middle of the city.

"What was that!?" Ember exclaimed, looking towards the chaos.

Cynder narrowed her eyes. Something was up. She wasn't sure if it was because this world wasn't as peaceful as it appeared, but one thing was for sure—either Spyro was there dealing with it, or he was heading there right now.

"I don't know," Cynder said, hopping out of the chair and starting to head towards whatever was going on. "But I intend to find out."

Ember watched as Cynder darted off. She frowned as she looked around nervously.

"U-um, wait up!" Ember said, hopping out of her chair and following after Cynder. She didn't exactly like the idea of heading *towards* the danger, but if things in this world were about to head south, she preferred to be with a fellow looper when it happened.

Meanwhile...

Sparx stood with his hand firmly placed on his chin. He watched as Hunter darted out of an alleyway and into another one. Then he watched as Hunter darted out of an alleyway far off in the distance

and into a house...and then he watched as Hunter somehow popped out of a tree near him. Sparx looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

"Apparently, either your sense of direction is just *that* bad, or the laws of physics are out for a lunch break," Sparx said with a chuckle before he grinned. "Give up yet, cheetah boy?"

Hunter narrowed his eyes. "You know, I really liked it better when I couldn't understand a word you said."

A cheeky grin appeared on Sparx's face, though it was quickly wiped off when what sounded like an avalanche echoed throughout the town. The duo raised their heads to see a cloud of dust kicking up not far off. Sparx looked at Hunter.

"Think that's where those two are?" Hunter asked, scratching his head.

"Well, if I know my Spyro well enough," Sparx said before he turned to the dust cloud. "C'mon! I get the feeling Spyro's gotten in over his head once again."

With a nod, the two darted off...in completely different directions. Sparx looked back, sighing as he darted after Hunter. Not a second later, Sparx came flying back, dragging Hunter by the ear.

Meanwhile, back at the park...

Classic rolled towards the left, dodging a bolt of lightning before retaliating with his own. He grinned when he saw it slam into Legend, but aside from some minor sparking, the other dragon appeared no worse for wear.

'Seriously! What's going on here!?' Classic thought, charging out of the way of a fireball and sending a mini-missile flying.

Legend thanked the ancestors for this armor, unflinching as the mini-missile hit him at full force. It stung like heck, but seeing the look of horror on his counterpart's face as he came flying out of the smoke cloud with not a scratch on him was priceless. He barrelled down to the ground, his counterpart barely having time to dodge as Legend used his earth element to make huge crater where Classic had once been.

Classic was breathing heavily, but didn't have enough time to relax as giant chunks of earth came flying at him. Classic ducked, rolled to the side, jumped, and fired a missile to blow up one of the chunks as he tried his best to keep from getting hit. As the wave of rocks began to die down, Classic barely had a moment to roll to the side as his counterpart came comet-dashing towards him, the flames managing to catch his side in the process.

Getting up, Classic grunted as he clutched his burning side. He saw Legend standing firm, no sign that he had taken any damage at all. Classic scowled. *'This armor is stronger than those suits at Lofty Heights! It just can't be the metal at work here!'*

Legends smirked, standing tall. His body, however, didn't feel as good as he looked. The constant barrage of missiles and elemental attacks were slowly starting to take its toll, but the armor was doing a good job of hiding that fact. He hunkered down, ready to pounce. *'Just let the armor do its job. If my opponent won't stay still, then I'll just have to make him!'*

With that, Legend prepared another bolder trap, waiting for an opportunity. All he needed was for Classic to come within range...

Seeing the brows furrow under his helmet, Classic knew full well to stay away. Either Legend was up to something, or he was starting to become frustrated. Regardless of what the case was, Classic knew that he needed to proceed with caution lest he wanted to be reintroduced to the ground below him.

'Think, Spyro,' Classic thought, making sure to keep a watchful eye in case his counterpart tried to pull something. *'When I'm invincible, it's usually the result of fairy magic or a power-up gate. If I'm going to win this fight, I'm going to have to remember what one of the few cool elders of my world taunt me.'*

Classic smirked, memories of what Red had taunt him rushing back to mind. He began the process of letting his sight be superimposed with his magic sense. After a bit of distortion, he spotted the blue vapor that cycled the armor's structure. Satisfied with his correct prediction, Classic cast a burst of magic to the artifact to request a command line. A rectangular mirage only visible to Classic shimmered into view. Classic smirked.

'Alright! Let's see what kind of party tricks those pieces of scrap metal are hiding!'

Classic watched as the command line began to display the armor's response.

"GoldArmor—magicalArtifact

Welcome. Username and Password?

[#!]_"

Legend watched as Classic stood in almost a trance, unmoving as he stared in his direction. *'What is he up too...?'*

Legend shook his head and glared at his counterpart. If Classic wasn't going to get in range for an attack, then he would have to go on the offensive.

Classic saw Legend heading his way and frowned, quickly darting to the side as he continued to look at the armor's command line. This was going to be a challenge, trying to access this armor's enchantments while dodging a juggernaut. Classic smirked. *'Well then, challenge accepted!'*

Classic weaved in and out as he dodged every attack Legend threw at him, keeping focus on the command line. At this point, Legend expected a fake-out from Classic, yet the pursuit went on for what appeared to be for no apparent reason.

"Why are you leading me on this chase!? Do you seriously expect me to tire out with this armor on!?" Legend taunted, keeping up behind his Classic counterpart. "I've spent the entirety of my journeys with it! You might want to try something different!"

Regardless of his words, Classic kept weaving in and out as he kept the chase going, all the while keeping a close eye on what Legend thought was himself. Legend narrowed his eyes. ' *Come to think of it, why is he always looking in my direction?'*

Classic smirked before he summoned another mini-missile in his mouth. He knew he wasn't going to be able to do what he wanted with Legend on his tail, so he was going to need a distraction. Lighting the fuse, Classic spat the missile towards the ground. Legend raised an eyebrow, thinking Classic had finally lost it. However, Legend was forced to cover his eyes as the resulting explosion kicked up a massive dust cloud.

Classic smirked before he ducked behind the debris from the domino of pillars from earlier. As the cloud died down, Legend looked around for Classic. The dragon in question poked his head out from one of the collapsed pillars.

Classic smirked. *'Alright, Spyro! Get crackin', cause time's a-wasting...'*

"Welcome. Username and Password?

[#!]Sourpuss

[!]Invalid Username. Try again.

[#!]Spyro

[!]Invalid Username. Try a& !^.

[#!]Pussycat

[!]Invalid Username. Tr% & !^.

[#!]_"

Classic stopped casting his thoughts to the magical artifact before him. At his third attempt for access, he had found something to exploit already? *'Huh. If I spam usernames at this thing, then the responses it gives begin to corrupt. I wonder...'*

"[#!]A

[!]Invalid Username. Try again.

[#!]B

[!]Invalid Username&*(%$& !^.

[#!]A

[!]Invalid&*(^(%$&*(%$& !^.

[#!]B

[!]&*%(&)8&*(^(%$&*(%$& !^. pASSWORD?

[#!]_"

Classic began to perform the same glitch over and over, having a good feeling like he was onto something. In the air above, Legend began scanning the battlefield, hovering in the air as he turned every which direction in an attempt to find his counterpart.

'Where'd he go?' Legend thought, making sure to be ready at a second's notice. He knew his counterpart was up to something, but exactly *what* was starting to worry him...

"Welcome. Enter a command."

Classic grinned. *'Alright! Now I can finally get some real work done! Let's take a look-see, shall we?'*

"[#!]run EnchantmentManager. emt

Show running enchantments, show available mana, or show available memory space?

[#!]show enchantments

[#!]kill

[!]This enchantment can cause damage to your magical artifact if you stop it. Continue?

[#!]Yes

Killing enchantment...

[!]This enchantment is not responding. Wait for a response or Force quit?

[#!]force quit

...Enchantment stopped.

[#!]_"

The blue vapor stopped cycling on the interior surface of the armor, much to Classic's satisfaction. He then closed his remote magic connection, and the armor's command line fizzled out of sight. *'Now, my best bet is to remove pieces of his armor without him noticing, and I think some telekinesis is just what the doctor ordered.'*

He requested his personal command line, and in the very right corner of his vision, another prompt appeared:

" Spyro-magician

Enter a command.

[#!]_"

Legend frowned, starting to become mildly annoyed with Classic's game of hide-and-seek. He began to focus harder, narrowing his eyes as he scanned the battlefield. Then, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a faint purple dot hiding behind a collapsed pillar. *'Got you!'*

Legend began to dive down, wrapping himself in a blanket of fire as he began to fly faster.

"Enter a command.

[#!]run Telekinesis. emt

Select destination.

[#!]select Spyro-magician/subspace

Select target(s).

[#!]select GoldArmor—magicArtifact/bracers, GoldArmor—magicArtifact/tailPiece, set moveSpeed to 0.25

Found 5 targets, mov—"

"—SON OF A DRAGONHIDE!"

Classic was nearly nailed full force by the purple-and-gold roman candle, barely rolling out of the way as he was grazed by the flames. He picked himself up, glaring at his assailant while he tried to push the pain of the raw burns Legend had caused to the back of his mind. By now, both combatants stood a good distance away, and Classic was absolutely *fuming* at the new development.

'Great! Now I'm going to have to set up a teleport spell if I want any chance of removing that armor!'

"[#!]run Teleport. emt

Remembering your locations, activate teleport when ready...

[#!]_"

"It isn't as fun to run when your opponent is just as fast, is it?" Legend taunted, getting ready to pounce with another comet-dash.

Classic smirked. Time to have some fun.

"Please, you call *that* speed?" he taunted, hunkering down. "You just got lucky! There's no way you're going to pull that off again!"

"Oh really?" Legend said, beginning to wrap himself in another wave of flames.

Classic grinned as Legend started to head his way.

"[#!]activate teleport

To use, focus on a location and think "teleport".

[#!]_"

And just like that, as Legend was about to slam into him, Classic disappeared in a flurry of polygons. Legend skid to a stop, glancing around furiously.

"Wh-what!?" he exclaimed, a completely dumbfounded look on his face. *'B-but he was just here! That doesn't make any sense! There's no way that he could have—'*

"Yo, duplicate!"

Legend spun around, a scowl on his face as he saw his counterpart standing not far behind him.

"What was that about being as fast as your opponent?" Classic taunted, a cocky grin on his face.

Legend growled before shooting a bolt of lightning at Classic. Smirking, Classic once again disappeared a cluster of polygons, appearing on top of a broken pillar.

"Missed me!"

Legend narrowed his eyes. There were so many things he wanted to yell right now, but only one word escaped his lips. "How!?"

"I have my ways."

Classic smirked, teleporting out of the way of another bolt of lightning. He appeared on another pillar, sticking his tongue out as he pulled down one of his eyelids. Teleporting again, he appeared behind Legend, tapping his shoulder mockingly. Teleporting away to avoid being smacked by Legend's tail, he appeared behind a pillar.

'Okay, enough messing around! Time to get rid of these cheap hunks of scrap metal!'

"[from !]tailPiece successfully moved.

[#!]_"

Classic smirked, poking his head out from behind the pillar to see the tail-piece of Legend's armor slipping off him and into Classic's subspace pocket. Legend was none the wiser. Classic was rather surprised to see Legend unaware of the magic that was currently surrounding him. *'Geez, I knew this guy was far behind, but I didn't think he was more or less from the Stone Ages!'*

"[from !]bracer3 successfully moved.

[#!]_"

Classic grinned as the bracer was pulled off and was stored into his subspace pocket. Much to his surprise, the armor was enchanted to be a light, if not nonexistent, burden to the wearer. Maybe that was why Legend didn't notice his 'uber armor' was starting to disappear piece-by-piece, though it was still odd that he didn't detect the magic that was being used to pull this off.

'Oh well,' Classic thought, smirking as he began to focus on another piece of armor. *'If grandpa didn't have the foresight to detect magic in his loop, then that's his loss.'*

Legend growled, looking back and forth for his counterpart. *'How was he so fast!? It was almost like he was...he was...'* Legend's eyes went wide before he smirked. *'Slowing down the passage of time! Dragon Time! Of course!'* Legend hunkered down, starting to glow. *'Well,* two *can play at this game!'*

With that, Legend let loose a mighty wave, the area around him warping in the process. Time had slowed to a crawl, with only Legend moving at a somewhat normal pace. He had been training to use Dragon Time in a way that wouldn't end up slowing himself down, his goal being to make it to the Well of Souls to save Cynder from her fate when she wasn't awake in any loop, but it looked like now it was going to come in handy. He couldn't keep it up forever, as he was already beginning to feel the strain it was starting to cause his body, but he knew that he wouldn't need this for long.

Classic didn't even have time to react. From his perspective, Legend began to blur as a chunk of earth magically appeared on his tail, and the next thing he knew, he was on the ground with butterflies circling around his head.

Classic placed a paw on his pounding head, glancing up to see Legend standing over him.

"I'm sorry, but *what* was that about speed?"

Classic didn't even respond, quickly teleporting behind another pillar. *'The heck was—?'*

He didn't have time to finish his thought, as he saw a purple blur heading towards him. Teleporting again, and again, and *again* in an attempt to avoid his counterpart, he knew he needed to do something, and fast. He could sense the air becoming magically charged each time Legend began to blur, which gave him an idea of what was going on.

'So he can *use magic. I'm actually impressed,'* Classic thought, continuing his teleportation spamming. *'Well, let's see what kind of forces are at work here!'*

"[#!] run MagicScan. emt

Scanning the surrounding area... processing...

Scan complete. Detecting powerful magical energies from the surrounding area. Effect appears to be slowing down the passage of time. Codename appears to be 'Dragon Time'.

[#!]_"

'A time-slow spell? That's something I definitely didn't expect from someone who can't even sense magic...' Classic thought, keeping up his teleport spam. *'Well then, let's see how he likes someone turning their own technique against them!'*

"[#!] pull from Spyro-mystic/spells/DragonTime. emt

Copying from source... Transferring... done.

[#!] install

Installing... done.

[#!] run DragonTime. emt"

Classic blinked, an odd sensation running over him as the scenery warped around him. He looked to the side to see pieces of rock slowly falling to the ground as if gravity had become null. He smirked as he heard the footsteps heading his way from behind him. Keeping perfectly still to keep up the illusion that there was only one dragon manipulating time at the moment, Classic waited for Legend to get close.

Running full force, Legend got ready to swipe at Classic with the earth wrecking-ball he had formed around his tail. He was caught completely off guard when Classic turned around and shot a bolt of lightning from his mouth. Legend rolled across the ground before he managed to dig his claws into the dirt and right himself on his paws. Legend could only look on with mouth agape as Classic took a defiant stance.

"Wha— *how!?* "

"Didn't I tell you before? *I have my ways!* "

Legends narrowed his eyes before charging at Classic.

From one who wasn't manipulating time at the moment, it appeared that two blurs were locked in an intense battle. Elements and hyper-speed mini-missiles went flying everywhere as the ground began to shake from the hyper-speed battle. Suddenly, the area flashed and both fighters were forcefully dragged out of the hyper-time battle and fell backwards, grabbing their heads. Not a second later, two scrolls appeared in front of them and unrolled themselves in the air.

"Hey, I don't give a crap what you two are up to, but *cut it out with the time manipulation!* If you two idiots end up causing a loop crash because of it, I'm sticking both your assess in the loop with Slendy! *Got it!?*

- Ihy"

Classic cringed as the memories of that no-faced freak came flooding back. Legends wasn't sure what Ihy had meant, but judging from his counterpart's reaction, it likely wasn't a good thing.

Frowning, both fighters got back on their paws. Classic smirked. Legend's leverage was now rendered null thanks to their admin. In a flash of polygons, he teleported away.

Before Legend knew it, the smell of ash became strong and he was slammed in the side with a mini-missile. The attack hurt a lot more than it should have, but Legend forced himself to his paws as he looked around. *'What's going on!? My armor should have absorbed that blow for me!'*

Glancing down, it was only then he noticed that some pieces of his armor were unaccounted for. Legends scowled, his eyes going wide. *'WHAT!? How the hell did he—?'*

Legend didn't have time to finish that thought as he was forced to dodge missile after missile. From on top of one of the few pillars that weren't knocked over, Classic smirked.

'Alright! Time to end this battle once and for all!'

With that, Classic teleported from his spot back onto the battlefield, just out of Legend's sight. He grinned, starting to run one of the oddest, if surprisingly effective, spells he had ever learned.

"[#!]run Egg. emt

[!]Not enough mana to run all 3 enchantments. Kill an enchantment?

[#!]kill teleport. emt

Forming shell, shrinking size...done.

[#!]_"

As the dust started to clear, Legend scanned the battlefield, a scowl on his face. *'Now where'd he go!?'*

Legend was livid. This was one too many times that he had lost track of his opponent. What would the guardians say if they were here to see this?

He quickly began to comb the area for his annoying counterpart, and as he did, he froze in surprise at what he found. What he saw, against all logic, despite everything that had happened, was a plainly colored dragon egg. Legend quickly ran over to it, horror on his face. How could it have got there?

'What's this doing here!?' he thought. *'Thank the ancestors it wasn't destroyed in the fight! If that had happened because of me...'* Legend shook his head, a determined look in his eyes. *'Doesn't matter now! I need to get this thing out of here. I may have failed that one loop to stop the temple raid, but I'm not about to let harm befall another egg under my—'*

"Surprise, dummy!"

Before Legend could even begin to process what was happening, Classic burst out of the egg. Legend looked on in horror as the egg shattered to pieces, almost unaware that Classic was even there.

'Time for some overdue payback!'

Classic pulled another mini-missile out of his subspace pocket, but this kind was much different. He didn't know how the Professor had accomplished this, but Classic was glad he did. It had come in handy during the fight against Scorch, and it was about to come in handy once again. Before Legend knew what hit him, he was pelted with a barrel full of mini-missiles, sending him flying.

As the dust began to clear, Legend was laying on the ground, breathing heavily, multiple scorch marks and bruises all over his body. Classic smirked. "Sweet dreams, duplicate."

Classic grinned, turning away and beginning to walk off. It was then he stumbled, all the blows he had taken from the battle starting to catch up to him as the adrenaline from the fight began to wear off. *'OW! ... Yeesh, might have took more of a beating than I thought.'*

He glanced back at Legend to find him still barely moving. Classic winced. *'Might have overdone it a little on the missile barrage, too...'*

As he continued to watch Legend for any sign of movement, Classic's pride over his victory began to trickle away. Taking a few seconds to reflect on his actions, Classic sighed and hung his head low. Turning around, he headed back towards Legend.

"Uh... Hey... You okay?"

'I failed...'

"Listen...umm... I didn't exactly mean for it to get this out of paw."

'The eggs in the temple... I couldn't do anything, even with all the skills I built up over these loops... Even when I took Ignitus's place before the raid. Too little, too late; the apes got their way...'

Classic watched as Legend seemed to stir. He backed away slightly, a small frown on his face. In the pit of his stomach, he was starting to get a sudden feeling of dread—like the calm before the storm.

'...and he took advantage of my regret, my failure, my weakness, to make a fool out of me!?'

Classic gulped before he glanced away. "Uh, hey, I'm going to see if I can get Hunter and the others here to help you. Just, uh, stay right there..."

'Unacceptable.'

Classic turned, getting ready to leave the park and head back to the apartment in hopes of finding Hunter. His plans were cut short as a low chuckle tore through the air. Spinning back to see where it had

come from, Classic could only watch, dumbfounded, as his duplicate proceeded to get up in spite of his blackened scales and swelling bruises.

'What the heck is this guy made of, diamonds?' Classic felt an uneasy feeling of dread as a dark aura began to surround Legend. He rationalized that it had to be some kind of spell that could easily be cancelled with his banish enchantment. With that in mind, he merged his magic sense on top of his sight to see what information he could glean from this new development. *'That—that's impossible! There's nothing there!'*

The creature before him sent shivers down Classic's spine. "What are you?" he breathed.

"Me?" the creature responded, his eyes shut as he chuckled. "I just finally stopped caring. About collateral damage, about pain, about restraint. Since you don't have any boundaries, I finally realized that I shouldn't either," it said with a smile. That grin had *far* too many teeth. "Don't worry, there won't be enough of you left to stain the dirt."

With that, Legend's eyes snapped open. They were glowing eerie white as his purple scales were overtaken by deep black. Classic took a step back in shock and fear, desperately using his command line to search for whatever magical forces were at work here, but each time, the result came with no response. Classic cringed as the now demonic-looking Legend took a step forward, the sadistic toothy grin on his face causing him to gulp.

If the fight hadn't gotten out of paw before, it was *definitely* about to now...

(Whooo boy... Classic's in something deep now. Looks all his taunting and prodding is about to come back to bite him big time. At the very least, Cynder and Ember seem to be getting a long just fine.

Sorry if this chapter was a bit disjointed. We just wanted to point out why the rest of the group isn't immediately rushing to the park to stop the fight. Also, for those wondering why I'm portraying Ember and Cynder as good friends and sister figures, there are several reasons. Mostly though it's because they almost always portrayed as being at each others throats, which is a characterization I personally can't stand. Usually it's to turn one of them into a whipping girl for the authors favorite ship, *another* pet peev of mine I can't stand, and I find doing such as the hallmark of a very poor-to-mediocre author. Besides, turning one of them into a death eater for shipping purposes is redundant considering there's *two* Spyros in this story.

If the next chapter takes a while to upload, that's because it's much longer than what this fic's use to. Like, 'almost on the same length as my one-shots' long. Considering it's this battles climax, it's too be expected though. Will Classic Spyro be able to survive Legend Spyro's dark form? You'll just have to wait and see...)

A Classic VS a Legend pt 3 (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments below.)

(Fused loop 1.1 continued)

A Classic VS a Legend Finale: (Feat: TokoWH, AbZHz101, and UkeleleNarwhal)

The air was thick. Classic could feel beads of sweat starting to drip down his face. He was never one to give up or back down from a battle, but as his now almost demonic-looking duplicate stood before him, it didn't take much for him to realize just how out of paw this had gotten. Legend took another step forward, a sadistic grin on his face.

"Uh, dude? I think you should probably lay down. You aren't looking so good there..." Classic said, taking a few steps back.

Legend let out a slow, low chuckle as his white, almost soulless eyes stared Classic down.

"Did you hear what I just said? Or are you magicians hard of hearing?" he said, his distorted, unnerving voice sending chills down Classic's spin. "I don't care. I *will* make you suffer. I *will* make you plead for a swift death, and I *will* happily deny that request."

Those were the last words Classic heard before a sharp pain shot across his chest. Legend was on him in an instant. Classic was thrown onto his back, the wind being knocked out of him in the process. That was the least of Classic's worries, as he barely caught sight of Legend's now blackened scales before he dug his claws into him. Classic shouted in pain as three large gashes opened across his chest.

Classic's eyes went wide as he saw Legend raise his claws again, his blood still dripping from them. Legend had a gleeful grin on his face. Classic shot out a stream of flames in desperation, causing

Legend to flinch as he held his paw in front of him to block the flames. In his short window of opportunity, Classic managed to get his hind paws under Legend's chest, and kicked with all his might to send Legend tumbling backwards.

Getting to his paws, Classic grunted as he grabbed where Legend had scratched, looking down to see crimson starting to stain his purple scales. Classic gulped, quickly focusing on setting his teleportation spell back up again and cursing himself for cancelling it in the first place.

"[#!]activate teleport

Remembering your locations, activate teleport when—"

'C'mon! Hurry up! Hurry up!'

Classic gritted his teeth as he saw Legend get back up onto his paws, the possessed dragon eyeing him with a sadistic smirk. The dark dragon lunged forward once again. Classic barely rolled out of the way again as he fought past the pain throbbing from his scars. As he got to his paws, Classic thrust his paw into his subspace pocket and willed a golden orb out. Smashing it, he began to glow. As Legend came charging, Classic quickly took to the sky.

'Thank god I had the foresight to grab some of those orbs from when I fought Ripto!'

Classic didn't have much time to comfort himself with that fact as a solid purple beam shot up into the air and nearly nailed him head-on. Classic looked down, wincing from the strain of trying to fly with an open wound. He saw his predator looking straight at him, about to fire another beam. Classic jerked to the left, grunting in pain as he barely avoided being nailed with a Convexity beam. In retaliation, he fired a super-charged fireball back at him.

Legend grinned, unmoving as the ball of fire headed his way. Opening his maw, he shot out a Convexity beam, the raw power

easily punching through the super-charged fireball like it wasn't even there. Classic's mouth fell open as he dodged out of the way, clutching his chest as he winced.

'How is that even possible!? For Pete's sake, those fireballs can punch through solid metal!'

Classic dived, dodging an other Convexity beam. He let out a shout of frustration and pain, trying to think of some way out of this that wouldn't end with the loop ending painfully early for him. Then, as he barely managed to weave around another beam, Classic saw the words of salvation he had been hoping for.

"[#!]activate teleport

To use, focus on a location and think "teleport".

[#!]_"

The command line didn't need to tell Classic twice. Not a second after those words appeared, Classic disappeared in a flurry of polygons. Legend sniggered, looking around at what was once a park with his glowing eyes.

"So, when you begin to fear for your life, you retreat? You truly are a coward," he said coldly, claws digging into the ground.

Classic reappeared on the ground a good ways behind Legend, eyes pleading as he clutched his chest. "Listen! I really don't want to fight anymore, alright!? It was kind of cool before, but I never planned on a deathmatch! Let's just call it off, for both our sakes!"

Legend merely turned around, a sadistic grin on his face. "Don't try to delay the inevitable. You'll exhaust yourself."

Legend opened his maw, ready to let loose another beam of Convexity. Not a second after he unleashed it, Classic was off in a flurry of polygons, the beam tearing through ground and trees like a

hot knife through butter. Classic materialized behind his dark counterpart, channeling his magic into his arms as he grabbed him in a choke hold. Legend began to flail wildly, Classic holding on for dear life.

"Let go of me, you little ingrate!" Legend choked out, glaring at Classic out of the corner of his eyes.

"No way! Not until you either pass out or *calm the hell down!* "

Legend grabbed Classic's arms, digging his claws into them as deep as he could manage before he tried to pull his counterpart off him. Classic shouted in pain, but nonetheless channeled as much magic as he could possibly muster into his arms to keep his grip strong. This went on for several seconds and, much to Classic's horror, he was slowly starting to lose ground.

'This dragon can't be real! He should have passed out a long time ago by now!'

Unfortunately for Classic, whatever had taken over his counterpart had proven stronger than he could have imagined. Legend pulled his arms out of the hold and flung him forward, the ground scraping against his open wounds and causing him to scream in pain. He rolled to a stop and got to his paws as blood dripped from where Legend had dug his claws.

Looking up, Classic's eyes went wide as he saw his counterpart open his maw and began to charge up a Convexity beam at near point-blank range. Even if Classic tried his teleportation spell, he wouldn't be able to pull it off in time to escape his fate. Closing his eyes as tight as he could and raising his paws in front of him, Classic waited for the inevitable.

However, much to his surprise, it never came.

"... Sparx!"

Classic's mouth was open as his eyes went wide in relief. Never before had he been so happy to see his constant companion in his entire life.

Sparx gritted his teeth, his body a now dull shade of blue as he kept up a shield against the raw power of the beam. Sparx may have been specialized in shielding magic, but the sheer power of this beam had almost knocked him down to his green coloration from that blow alone. Barely staying in place as is, Sparx struggled to look back at Classic without losing focus, as that was all that stood before them and certain doom.

"Well, what are you waiting for, you idiot!? *Move, move, move!* "

Classic snapped back to reality, getting ready to cast a teleportation spell to get them both out of there. However, no sooner had Classic booted the spell up did the Convexity beam falter as Legend let out a grunt of pain. Looking towards his counterpart, Classic saw an arrow sticking out of his shoulder.

"Yo! Spyro!"

Classic turned his head, a grin on his face as he saw Hunter not far off.

"Next time you try to take on some demonic entity, how about going in with some backup first?" Hunter joked, joining Classic's side as he aimed an arrow towards Legend.

"Trust me, I think I learned the lesson the hard way!" Classic replied before he looked back at his counterpart.

Legend pulled the arrow out of his hide, blood dripping from the wound as he tossed it away. Looking over to Hunter, he growled.

"Out of my way," he said evenly. "I'm only after *him.* " As a counterpoint to his almost civil words, the venom that dripped from his last word was almost enough to make them physically ill.

"No way, you insane freak!" Sparx said, narrowing his eyes.

"Yeah! You mess with one of us," Hunter said, notching an arrow in his bow. "...You mess with *all* of us!"

Legend growled, eyes narrowed as he stared the trio down. Then, as if someone had flipped a switch, his expression lightened.

"Alright," Dark Spyro agreed evenly, almost pleasantly. The mood shift caused the three to balk. "You die first."

The statement was followed up with a Convexity beam aimed straight at Hunter. Classic Spyro's eyes widened. Hunter, who didn't have any way to block or dodge—he was aiming that impossible thing at Hunter! Classic could only watch in horror as the beam came closer to Hunter, who was trying to get out of the way, but it wouldn't be in time. Then Sparx's barrier again flared to life, eating Dark Spyro's attack long enough for Hunter to get out of the way, turning Sparx green.

When the attack ended, the three Classic loopers took a moment to gape at the Legend anchor.

"What the hell, man!?" Classic Spyro yelled. "You were going to kill Hunter! He has nothing to do with this!"

At that, Dark Spyro actually began to laugh. "Oh, and now we see the hypocrisy! You're free to do what ever the fuck you want, but the instant I do something you don't expect, you call foul!"

Dark Spyro's voice grew deeper as he growled, "I warned him of what would happen if he stood in front of you. He made a choice! Don't talk to me about how he was innocent. YOU. USED. AN. EGG. AGAINST. ME! You think you can use him as some impregnable shield, coward? If the fastest way to you is through him, guess what? I'm taking it. When he stepped on that battlefield, it should have been with the knowledge that he would die. Don't start crying just because the killing happens in front of you..."

Dark Spyro started to laugh again. "But, oh, you ignored my warning about that, didn't you? 'I always save everybody anyways.' Well, well, well, coward. It looks like you've got three options: give yourself up, kill me, or watch as I pick your little pals in your superhero club off one by one and then make sure you die with the knowledge that you couldn't save them..." Dark Spyro chuckled again. "And, for the record, you won't be killing me."

"Who said I would kill you? What kind of hero would that make me? For that matter, what kind of hero are *you* ? Before we fought, didn't you say that I needed empathy or whatever? Where's your empathy, huh!?"

Legend attempted to think of a dark-humored response, yet he was cut off again. This time, Classic's voice strengthened and the dark dragon yielded. "No, don't speak, I'm not finished."

Classic's eyes narrowed as he jabbed a claw in Legend's direction, struggling not to wince from his scabbing cuts. "You threw empathy out the window, and you tried to kill my friend! Then, you try to justify it by saying that I turned into an egg! I don't know what your deal is with eggs and killing people, but let me tell you that there is a huge difference between those concepts! If eggs are a sensitive topic to you, then I apologize. There, I said it. But, that gives you no right to kill, especially when I had no idea that you would react this strongly! So do us all a huge favor and *relax* . Remember what I said before the fight? *RELAX* !"

A blank expression was worn on the demon's face after that outburst. Legend's true eyes flickered in the white haze that had replaced them, but alas, it was short-lived, and his face creased into a scowl. His dark form took control of his mouth and tried another personal attack. "I also said you need to grow up. You treat this like a game! When you step onto the battlefield, you die. Plain and simple. Only in an act of divine mercy is it that you survive. And you're fine with that...as long as it doesn't happen to you."

"You're willing to go the distance, just as long as that fire isn't burning you or anyone you know. But the instant it does...then you cry "Stop! No! You've gone too far!" But the fact is, if I told you the same thing you'd tell me to suck it up, because you are better than me. If you aren't willing to swallow your own crap don't go using it on someone else!"

Classic deadpanned. He didn't need this, not from a potential murderer, *not* from a psycho who tried to rip his guts out. "I decided that this fight went too far when you *turned black* and *got up* after I shot you with a full barrel of missiles. So take that argument that you just pulled from under your tail, and suck it."

"Only because I *got up* . Tell me, what would have happened if I hadn't gotten up? Weren't you *leaving* ? And really, if you thought it had gone too far, it would have been *before* you shot me. Stop lying to me... Or maybe, it's time for you to stop lying to yourself."

With his brows lowering, Classic had more than enough of Legend's stabbing words. "I was leaving to get Hunter so *we* could get *you* some medical attention! On top of that, I know how much damage those missiles inflict. I wouldn't have used them if they would've killed you; I used them to end the fight. And apparently, they did the job. Now, it isn't a fight at all. It's *animal control* ." His last words dripped with exasperation. Classic couldn't bear to hear this liar anymore, but Legend opened his mouth again, much to his chagrin.

"Right... You were going to get help, just like we left Hunter's so that you could show me some of the technologies that this world has to offer, right?" He made a mocking clap.

"I don't know about you guys, but I'm starting to get really sick of this guys BS," Hunter whispered, getting ready to pull out another arrow. "I say if this guy isn't going to listen to reason, we're just going to have to *make* him."

Classic narrowed his eyes. Some part of him wanted to believe Hunter's words, but at the same time, he wasn't sure how to go

about this. This guy had already attempted to kill him, and Classic could barely hold his own against him as is. He frowned. He hated backing down from a fight, but at the end of the day, he would be willing to sacrifice some pride in return for *staying alive.*

"As much as I hate say it, Hunter, we're going to have to back off until we come up with a plan," Classic said flatly.

Ignoring the frown on Hunter's face, Classic brought up his command line and got ready to activate his teleportation spell. He focused on bringing Hunter and Sparx along with him this time.

"[#!] run teleport. emt

Multiple entities detected for teleportation. Additional magic power required."

Classic growled in annoyance, beginning to focus on transferring more magical energy to the spell. Unfortunately, he wasn't going to have the time needed to do so.

"Look out!"

Classic was knocked out of his trance-like state as Sparx darted in front of him and Hunter, casting a shield spell to block a Convexity beam about to tear into them. As the beam dissipated, Sparx disappeared in a puff of smoke. Classic glared forward, growling as he saw Legend standing there with a sadistic grin on his face.

"What's the matter? Did finally realizing how much of an idiot you are stun you into forgetting I was here?"

"I don't think we're going to get a chance to back off, Spyro," Hunter said flatly, drawing an arrow and getting ready to fire.

Classic bared his fangs. This was seriously bad. There was no way he'd get a chance to channel his magic into the teleportation spell, and he knew for a fact that there was no way Hunter would last long

if he was in direct confrontation with this psycho. He wasn't too worried about Sparx, though. As soon as he got in the general facility of a magic butterfly, the magic that linked him to Classic would restore him back to life...

That was when it hit Classic. It was by far no permanent solution to their problem, but at least it would keep Hunter from getting killed for the time being.

"Hunter," Classic said, glancing over to his friend. "You still have your jetpack in your subspace pocket?"

"Yeah, why?"

"I need you to go collect some fodder animals so I can bring Sparx back into this."

"What!?" Hunter said, turning his head towards Classic. "What about you, though!? I can't just let you fight this monster alone!"

"We don't have a choice, Hunter!" Classic said, his voice becoming more commanding by the second. "You saw what those beams he fires can do! There's no way we'll make it through this battle without Sparx here to shield us from it!"

Hunter frowned, looking between his friend and the monster he would have to face alone for the time being. He growled, but nonetheless knew Classic was right.

"Just...try to stay alive until I get back, okay?"

With that, Hunter darted behind Classic, putting his bow back in his subspace before pulling his jetpack out. Classic could feel beads of sweat starting to form on his forehead.

'Trust me, Hunter. I think that's what a good portion of this battle is about to come down to...'

Meanwhile...

Cynder's left eye twitched.

"What do you *mean* you won't let us by!?" she demanded, stomping her paws on the ground as she took an offensive stance.

The guard dragon looked down with an imposing eye. "Sorry, young lady, but it's far too dangerous to let anyone by, let alone children."

"Then why the heck aren't you people down there stopping it!?" she growled, narrowing her eyes at the dragon.

The guard looked down at her before turning his head towards the chaos at the park. He watched as a purple beam erupted towards the sky in a bright flash. His eyes went wide and he gulped before turning back towards the disgruntled dragoness. Clearing his throat, he couldn't bring himself to look her in the eyes.

"We...we believe that situations like this have a natural tendency to work themselves out."

Cynder's eye twitched again before she turned around with a groan.

'Cowards,' she muttered under her breath before she began to head back towards Ember.

Ember blinked, sitting in place as she watched the scene. She glanced over Cynder to catch sight of purple beams shooting up into the sky. Her eyes went wide before she looked back at Cynder.

"Somehow, I have a bad feeling about this..." she muttered to herself. "Are we sure we should be heading towards the giant beams of light shooting up in the sky?"

"If you don't want to, you can stay here," Cynder said before looking back towards whatever was going on at the park. "I don't think I have much of a choice, though. I get the feeling my Spyro is down there, and from the look of things, he needs help."

Cynder narrowed her eyes at the ongoing chaos. It was far more than just a feeling. She knew there were only two dragons in her world that were capable of firing Convexity beams, and since the 'admin' said that one of them wasn't in this loop, it didn't take much to figure out who it was through process of elimination.

Ember paused, biting her lip as she looked back at the chaos. She didn't like the idea of going down there, not one single bit. However, she didn't want to let Cynder go into that madness by herself. She also didn't like the idea of being left alone in the city, especially if stuff like that was going to break out at random. She lowered her head, sighing as she shook it.

"How are we supposed to get past them, though?" Ember said, raising her head. "It's not like you can just force your way through. The loops may reset everything, but I'd still like to avoid spending a loop running from the police if I can."

Cynder paused, turning back towards the world's wimpiest police force with a scowl. She needed to get by, and from what she'd seen so far, she could easily take them, not even accounting for the extra experience she had gained from the loops. However, Ember was right. She didn't want to spend one of her rare peaceful loops on a wanted list, especially considering her baseline. She narrowed her eyes. She could probably use her shadow element to sneak past them, but she had never tried using the element while carrying another dragon before. Besides, part of her didn't exactly want to reveal the fact that she had an affinity with the darkness to her sister yet.

Cynder blinked. Had she just thought of Ember as her sister? True, it was part of the loop, but...

Cynder shook her head. She didn't have time to think about it. Spyro needed her help. Looking up at the sky, she smirked.

"I think I have an idea," Cynder said, spreading her wings. "They may be able to block the ground, but I'd like to see them stop

someone in the air!"

"Uh, wait!" Ember said, raising her paw up towards Cynder. "I—"

Unfortunately, before she could finish, Cynder was already off. Ember watched as Cynder shot up into the air, frowning as she hunkered down in defeat.

"—can't...fly..."

Cynder pumped her wings as fast as she could, going higher and higher until she was sure she was out of the guards' sight. She smirked. She'd like to see those guards try and stop her from way up here—

Cynder looked forward, stopping dead in her tracks as she could not believe the sight that was before her. She could feel her left eye starting to twitch again as she saw a gathering of dragons in uniform before her, most of them just hovering there, some of them holding barriers. Cynder was silent for a few seconds, expression blank as she tried to process the sheer absurdity of what was in front of her. Finally, she scowled and let out a low growl.

"Oh *come on!* That doesn't even make *any sense!* "

Classic darted to the left, a Convexity beam missing him by inches. Sparx darted behind him, having managed to regain his form, though he was sickly green. Classic knocked a sheep Hunter had thrown towards him down with his horns, the fodder animal releasing a butterfly that Sparx happily went to chow down on. As Sparx regained a blue coloration, Classic looked back to see Legend charging at him. With barely any time to react, Classic rolled out of the way to avoid being pounced upon.

He shot a wave of flames towards Legend, the dark dragon flinching and giving Classic enough time to put some distance between them. Legend growled, looking back towards his counterpart with a scowl.

Classic looked around for another fodder animal. He knew if he wanted to get through this, he was going to have to keep Sparx as healthy as possible. Legend scoffed.

"If all you're going to do is play with butterflies this entire battle, then you might as well accept your fate now," Legend stated coldly, and followed it up with a sadistic chuckle. "You truly are an infant. No wonder you like to hide in your egg."

"This coming from a psychopath who's trying to kill everyone he gets his paws on!" Classic spat back, scowling as he got ready to move at a moment's notice. "I can hardly believe you're supposed to be me from another world! How the hell were you ever considered a hero in your world!?" Classic growled, smoke flaring from his nostrils.

At this, Legend began to scowl, hunkering down as if getting ready to pounce.

"You keep throwing that line back in my face. 'What kind of hero are you?' 'How could you ever be a hero?' Tell me, when did I *ever* call myself a hero?" Legend asked coldly, narrowing his eyes.

"Oh lord, don't tell me this is really some 'evil twin from an alternate dimension' business," Sparx muttered, narrowing his eyes.

Classic narrowed his eyes, keeping a close eye on Legend as the dark dragon began to circle him.

"Let me tell you something about my world... I'm no hero. I never claimed to be, and never thought of myself as such," Legend said coldly, narrowing his eyes. "I was just a dragon that knew nothing about his heritage, and naïvely went off in hopes of finding out about it. Want to know what I found?"

Classic said nothing, silently watching Legend while being prepared to bolt the second he saw any moves towards him.

"' *Surprise! You're actually a legendary dragon we're going to send off into the middle of a three year war despite only being a child!'* " Legend said in a mocking voice, raising his head up before he went back to glaring at Classic. "Before I knew it, *everyone* was expecting miracles out of me, expecting a *child* to do something *millions* of *adults* couldn't!"

Legend began to shake, digging his claws into the ground as he narrowed his eyes. "They never *once* stopped to realize the amount of pressure they were putting on me, or the danger. No..." Legend growled, the earth below him beginning to shake. "They were all too worried about themselves. They expected me to be this pillar of strength, to be this 'knight in shining armor', to *be* a perfect hero. A perfect *soldier...* "

Legend turned to face Classic, his voice becoming icy cold. "I think you can see the result," he stated, hunkering down with a scowl. "So you see, there are no heroes. Just idiots who ' *luck* ' into their position and are expected to magically make the world better until they die."

Classic glared at Legend, making sure to move at a moment's notice. A silence soon followed, as both sides were at a stalemate. Finally, Classic spoke.

"I get it," Classic said, his glare unmoving. "Your loop is horrible. You were forced into something you didn't want to do, and couldn't handle the pressure until it turned you into what you are now." Classic said, his tone of voice unchanging. "If you're looking for pity, then fine. I'm sorry I was such a jerk to you."

With that, Classic turned to face Legend, hunkering down as he scowled. "However, there's one little thing your argument forgot about."

Legend chuckled sadistically. "Oh, and what's that?" he asked in an amused voice.

"Well, unlike you, I *chose* to do all my adventures," Classic said, a tiny flare escaping his nostrils. "When those idiots who thought they could take over the realm reared their ugly mugs, I was the first one to jump into the battle to stop them! I was never dragged into it, and I certainly never went crazy from it!" Classic said, beginning to bare his fangs. "So don't go saying there's no such thing as heroes, because I know for a *fact* that there is!"

Legend said nothing, appearing to be moderately surprised by Classic's response. Silence fell over the two. Legend began to chuckle before it turned in to a full on laugh. Classic scowled.

"Exactly what's so funny!?" he spat, digging his claws into the ground.

Legend's laughter began to subside, and he looked at Classic with an amused expression. "Sorry, but that was just too rich," he said with an unnervingly amused voice before he shot Classic a glare. "Refresh my memory... Didn't you say your first adventure started because all the dragons in your realm were turned to stone?"

"Yeah, so?" Classic said, narrowing his eyes.

Legend smirked sadistically. "And you were the only one who wasn't, correct?"

"What are you, hard of hearing? Yeah!"

Sparx narrowed his eyes and was suddenly hit by what Legend was doing. He quickly turned to Classic. "Spyro, wai—"

"So, in other words, you were the only one who *could* do anything about it, all because you were *lucky* enough not to get hit with a spell."

Classic stood silent, growling at Legend's words as smoke escaped his nostrils. Sparx glared at Classic's demonic counterpart, who was grinning sadistically.

"...Fine, I'll give you that," Classic said coldly. "But that doesn't change the fact that my other adventures were of my own choice!"

"Really now?" Legend asked, narrowing his eyes. "Why don't you tell me about them, then? That way we can know for sure whether or not you're truly a *hero* like you claim to be," Legend said coldly before he began to glow a soft orange. "In fact, why don't we make this interesting?"

Classic tensed up. He had no idea what his counterpart was up to, but from what he had seen so far, it was likely nothing good.

Legend's grin grew wider. He could sense it, the odd power that had been brought on from that horrid loop. He had no idea what it truly was, but he liked it. He hadn't been able to tap into that power again for all the preceding loops. Until *now,* that was. He grinned. It was time to *experiment.*

Legend rose into the air, almost unnaturally. He wings didn't move, nor did he seem to be hovering. He was just floating in the air, body tightening as he appeared to be storing up power. Classic could feel sweat starting to drop down his forehead, though whether it was from the heat or from fear...

It was only then that Classic noticed the sudden raise in temperature. Looking down, his eyes went wide as the ground appeared to have steam coming off it. It was then the ground started to shake, Classic barely able to keep his balance. His head darted back and forth as watched the chaos going on around him, the heat growing more intense as the ground started to crack. He looked up at Legend, who was glowing even more brightly, his eyes closed shut. Then, as he opened them, he let out a mighty roar and a blinding flash of light engulfed the area.

Classic was forced to close his eyes as Sparx grabbed onto him to keep from being blown away. Disoriented, Classic slowly opened his eyes. They shot open wide at what he saw.

The grassy patch he had been standing on had been turned into a jagged mound of rock. All around him he could see lava where land had once been, the bright orange glow almost blinding. He flinched at the intense heat. He had been around lava before on his adventures, but even then the heat he was feeling right now was almost unreal. He glanced up, placing a paw on his forehead to block out the blinding light. There, Legend hovered in the air, a sadistic grin on his face.

"Now then, let's see exactly what kind of *hero* you are."

Classic tried his best to process the scene around him. He had no idea how his counterpart had done it, but he had somehow turned the area around him into a lake of lava. He scowled. His teleport had been rendered almost near useless, unless he felt like teleporting himself into a hot and painful bath. He thought about how he could possibly get out of this. The super orb could possibly help, giving him the ability to fly, but he ran the risk of Legend out-maneuvering him and tossing him into the lava. Classic was a good flier thanks to all the trips to the speedways, but considering his duplicate could fly under his own power while he couldn't...

'If I could just cool this place down with enough water...but that's impossible. Even with my water breath, it would take way too long, and I can't shoot water to make a platform because it would give away where I would be heading...' Classic thought with a scowl. This whole situation just screaming 'you're screwed, buddy.'

Legend smirked, hovering in the air. "So, let's hear about your other adventures, shall we? It would be a shame for you to die before you can tell me all about your tales of *heroism.* " Legend could barely contain his enjoyment, cupping his paws around his face like a child engrossed in a fairy tale. *'This is going to be a riot.'*

Classic was slightly caught off guard by Legend's sudden mood shift, but nonetheless didn't buy it for a second. Considering the last time he'd suddenly got cheerful, he'd attempted to murder Hunter in cold blood...

Classic shook his head. He knew his counterpart was up to *something* , but he wasn't sure what. In the mean time, though, he decided to take advantage of this reprieve and entertain his enemy, if only to buy time for him to figure out a way around his teleportation being rendered useless.

"Fine then. Since you seem so interested, who am I to deny your curiosity?" Classic said with a smirk. "It all started on a rainy day in the Artisan Realm..."

And so Classic began to recount his adventures during his stay at Avalar. How he came upon, how he had helped the inhabitants of his own free will, and how he had kicked Ripto's butt six ways to Sunday. All the while, though, in the back of Classic's mind, he was racing with ideas for how to get out of this situation.

'I need to cool the ground so it can be safe for my teleportation, and I need a way to make it appear right there when I land on it so it doesn't give away where I'm heading... Wait...' Classic thought, managing to keep his story-telling charade up rather well. *'This is crazy, but I don't really have any other choice. I really hope this works, because otherwise I'll be in for a world of hurt!'*

"[#!]about Telekinesis. emt maximum weight

Telekinesis can handle a maximum of seventy five kilograms at current mana

[#!]about Teleport. emt maximum weight

Teleport can handle a maximum weight of three hundred kilograms at current mana"

'I think I might actually be onto something here...'

"So, anyways, I came upon this portal that lead to Zephyr, a land that was caught in a war with Breeze Harbor and— *cough, cough!* "

Classic turned his head behind him as he 'coughed', while in reality he was attempting to pull one over on Legend. With each cough, he spat out a few small blobs of water which he quickly caught with his telekinesis spell. Holding them behind him, and with Legend none the wiser, he scratched the back of his head in a mock embarrassed gesture.

"Sorry about that," Classic said, a mock sheepish grin on his face. "All the ash from this lava is really starting to mess with my throat."

Legend smirked. "No problem. I'm kind of impressed, you managing to pull off such feats of *heroism* despite having such bad allergies."

It took everything Classic had to keep a straight face. *'Yeah, yeah. Laugh it up, ya blind idiot!'*

With that, Classic went back to stalling for time. He began to get a general assumption of what he would need to do to keep his plan going. Exactly how much magic he would need to focus into his telekinesis spell, how to keep the consistency of it by adding more water to it when need be, and how much magic he would need to layer over the water to keep it from boiling. He could sense Sparx glancing over to him, knowing that the dragonfly could sense he had something planned.

Classic smirked. No sooner did he finish recounting his tale of Avalar did he finally finish his magic calculations. *'Okay, here goes nothing...!'*

"So anyways, there ya have it! I chose to help all the people in Avalar of my own will! Like a hero *should!* "

"What a very interesting tale," Legend said, crossing his arms. "Clearly, it was quite the adventure."

"Sure was!" Classic said with a defiant grin.

"Too bad it still proves my point."

The smirk was wiped off Classic's face before it was quickly replaced with a scowl. Classic narrowed his eyes. "Wha—no way! I chose to help the people of Avalar—"

"Because an intellectually gifted mole summoned you through a portal, a portal that you happened to step through at that *specific* time, and had to be deactivated because the evil dictator trying to take over the realm showed up shortly after," Legend said, a sadistic grin on his face. "On top of that, they weren't even summoning you specifically. You said they needed *a* dragon. *Any* dragon could have been put in that same exact position. Even not accounting for that, there's still the fact that the only reason you helped the other realms was because you needed the talismans and orbs from them if you wanted to return home. You *had no choice* in that matter."

Legend grinned as he watched Classic's face go blank for a few seconds. Classic didn't realize how badly he had trapped himself in his own words there, truly believing that his tale of Avalar would be enough to shut his dark counterpart up.

'Crap... I never thought of it that way before...' Classic scowled, shaking his head.

Seeing his friend's distressed state, Sparx hovered closer to him. "Careful, Spyro. Don't let this evil twin of yours get inside your head."

Classic nodded. "Right. This guy is just trying to mess with me." With that, the smirk returned as he glared at Legend.

Legend scoffed. "What's the matter? Has realizing how wrong you are caused you to go mad?"

"Nope. I'm just amused by how wrong *you* are," Classic said, a faint magical glow around him. "I chose to be a hero then, and I choose to be a hero now!"

With that, Classic brought out his current trump card. The blob of water he was concealing began to expand around him, held in place

by his telekinesis. Before Legend could even catch wind of what Classic was up to, said dragon had teleported away in his water bubble with Sparx, appearing a few inches above the lava lake.

'I really, REALLY hope this works!'

As Classic began to fall down in the bubble, he could hear the hissing sound of lava cooling under him. Focusing as much magic as he could on *not* being boiled alive, the lava began to solidify and Classic soon landed on solid rock. Taking a moment to steady his nerves, he looked up to see his counterpart's face curled in a scowl, fangs barred as he let out a low growl. Classic smirked at his handiwork.

'Go ahead, give it all you got!' Classic thought with a grin. *'Don't matter* what *you throw at me! You aren't going to keep me down!'*

Cynder tapped her paw impatiently as she watched the guards look back at the chaos like the world was ending. She knew her Spyro was down there, and seeing the park suddenly turning into a field of lava, she knew she needed to get down there as quickly as possible. The problem was trying to get past 'officer of the year' here. She growled. Forcing her way past them was seeming more like a viable option by the second.

"Um... Maybe we can bribe them with donuts?" Ember suggest, a claw on her chin. "Cops like donuts."

Cynder shot her a flat glance. Ember scratched the back of her head in response as she gave a sheepish grin.

"It was only a suggestion," she said before going back to silently thinking of ideas.

Several seconds passed, and Cynder grew more impatient by the second. She began to growl before hunkering down. No sooner was

she about to say "Alright, screw this!" did Ember quickly place a paw on her shoulder.

"I have an idea!"

Cynder wasn't sure if this was brilliant or just incredibly ridiculous. Disguising themselves as bushes wasn't too out there. Doing it in the middle of a city seem strange. Doing it in the middle of city *and* using donuts to distract cops was just plain silly.

The crazy part, though? It *worked* .

Cynder pulled herself out of the bush, looking a ways back at the cops munching on a box of donuts that Ember had placed just in their sights. Cynder struggled to say anything, a blank look on her face as words failed her. She looked over to Ember, who had an innocent smile on her face.

"See? Told you cops like donuts."

Cynder opened her mouth, trying to force anything remotely sounding like a word out. Finally, defeated, she managed to ask the obvious. "Just... *how?* "

Ember glanced away, a sheepish grin on her face. "It's a long story, actually. It involved a loop where several cops had set up a strict 5 PM curfew, some shenanigans involving a giant nutty bar, and a lot soap."

Seeing the utterly dumbfounded look on Cynder's face, Ember scratched the back of her head. "Trust me. It makes about as much sense being there as explaining it."

Cynder sat at a loss for words, but the sound of explosions going off in the distance snapped her back to reality. Shaking her head, she narrowed her eyes towards the ongoing chaos.

"Never mind that now. Spyro needs help!"

With that, Cynder charged towards the sound of explosions without a moments' hesitation. Ember paused, watching the explosions and flowing lava in the distance with wide eyes. She gulped, but nonetheless was quick to chase after her loop sister.

Classic thought himself a genius after the recent invention of his water shield. However, as he warped from point to point to avoid Legend's unholy wrath, he realized that he had just dug himself into a ditch. *'Crap. I didn't realize it until now, but how the heck am I suppose to attack back? This shield makes most of my elements useless, and if Grimdark here finds a way around this bubble, I'm screwed. Unless...'*

Legend fired blasts of magma at his opponent in disbelief. The violet insect should have died by now, along with his annoying posse. How hard could it be to kill a magician, anyway?

Another stroke of inspiration came to Classic, and he swam closer to the edge of the aquatic barrier as he continued teleporting, letting loose streams of ice. Lines began to form on the surface, and matrices of crystals soon followed. Moments later, saucer-sized caps of ice floated on the outer edge, ready for use as weapons. Classic admired his handiwork, the idea stolen from the icicles Legend shot at him near the beginning of the fight. *'I'd better keep up the good ideas, it's the only reason why I'm still alive.'*

Legend charged forward, attempting to unleash another blast of Convexity, and Classic smirked as he shot the ice shards out at the dark dragon. Legend staggered back from the onslaught before Classic teleported away once again. Regaining his balance, Legend growled as he looked around for his counterpart. Classic teleported behind one of the pillars that hadn't collapsed to collect his thoughts.

'Okay, so far, so good,' Classic thought, setting his ice shards back up. *'Not sure if this'll be enough, though. If anything, it'll at least give*

me some platforms to stand on if I have to drop this.' Classic glanced down towards the three scars his counterpart had branded his chest with. *'Odd... My chest is starting to feel a lot better since I put this shield up. Is the magic holding this up healing me somehow...?'*

Legend narrowed his eyes, a scowl on his face as he looked around for his counterpart.

"For someone who claims they aren't a coward, hiding seems to be your favorite tactic!" Legend proclaimed, beginning to fly around the battlefield in search of Classic. "What's the matter? Has realizing that your adventures boil down to coincidence taken away your will to fight?"

Classic scowled. He teleported in front of his counterpart and began to bombard him with ice shards.

"Enough with the 'it's all a coincidence, there are no heroes' crap!" Classic said before teleporting behind his counterpart and starting the shard rain anew. "Just because you found a flaw in two of my adventures doesn't prove anything!"

Legend glanced behind at his counterpart before he flew up into the air to escape the rain of ice shards. Looking down, he saw Classic's face curled into a scowl. Legend smirked. He could tell he was getting desperate to prove him wrong.

"Oh really? Well, alright then," Legend said, a sadistic grin on his face. "If you believe that so adamantly, then why don't you tell me about another one of your idiotic misadventures?"

Classic growled. It was time to shut this guy up for good. His story about fighting the Sorceress should be more then enough. But at the same time, Classic was a bit hesitant to bring up the fact that a whole years worth of eggs had been kidnapped, lest it caused this guy to go even more insane than he already was. Still, it was one of his more heroic exploits. Going down that rabbit hole to a forgotten land to save a generation's worth of eggs, all because...

'...because I was the only one small enough to fit down the hole.'

Classic shook his head. *'NO! Do* NOT *let this guy get in your head!'* Classic looked up at the smirk on his counterpart's face and responded by baring his fangs. *'Still, I can't use that now because he'll end up throwing that in my face... Alright then, how about this!'*

"Fine, since you asked so *nicely* ," Classic said, a whole load's worth of disdain in his voice. "There was the time Red attacked the Dragon Realms. He revived Gnasty and began to place dark stones all over the realms. Said stones warped the area around them and messed with how everyone acted. When the Professor told me about this, I was the first one to jump at that chance. *Of my own choice,* " Classic said, giving a defiant smirk. "Or are you so far gone right now that you believe even remotely *hearing* of a disaster doesn't count as a choice?"

Legend was silent for a few seconds before a smirk found its way to his face. Hovering in the air, his almost soulless eyes looked down upon his counterpart. "Interesting... You say that these stones mess with how people act... How so?"

Classic raised his eyebrow. "Well... I dunno. *Everyone* was wonky at the time. I think it like brings out certain traits in people and locks them into it or...something."

Legend was silent before a grin appeared on his face. Classic narrowed his eyes, knowing he was up to something. The dark dragon placed his paw on his head, giving his counterpart an icy cold stare. "So you're saying that these gems bring out certain traits in people?"

"Yeah. Didn't you hear me the first time?"

"Oh, I heard you...but do *you* realize what *you're* saying?"

Classic's face went blank at his counterpart's words. Seeing his confusion, Legend grinned sadistically.

"Allow me to explain," Legend said, narrowing his eyes. "If the gems bring out certain traits in people, how can you say it was your *choice* to stop the one causing it? How do you know it wasn't the gems that influenced you to do so?"

Classic's eyes went wide. Legend chuckled at the sheer look of dread on his counterpart's face.

"Now you're getting it. Without the gems there to influence you, who's to say you wouldn't have declined? Unless you have some way to prove that you chose to help of your own free will, it's just another case of right place, right time."

Classic narrowed his eyes, wanting to say something to shut his counterpart up, wanting to say *anything* to fight his claim, but...

'Gah!' Classic grabbed his head. *'Okay, calm down! Just because...* four *of your adventures have been proven to just be coincidence doesn't mean this monster is right! Come on, you must have another adventure that can shut him up! Uh...'*

Sparx looked towards his Spyro, seeing his friend beginning to twitch as he tightened his closed eyelids. Sparx's eyes went wide. Raising a hand, he went to try to comfort him. "Spyro? C'mon, man. Don't let him get to you!"

Sparx got no response. Spyro just continued to shake.

'The Sorcerer! ...No, I was the only one who could fight him because my magical abilities were the only ones that could rival his, and Ragnar was only willing to train me to fight the shadow minions! Come on, think! Think!'

Sparx placed his hand on Spyro's shoulder, starting to shake him to knock him out of his trance. "Spyro! Please, snap out of it!"

Classic didn't respond; small droplets started to form around his eyes before merging with his water shield.

'He can't be right! He can't be right! I must have something to shut him up! Come on, he can't be right, I'm a hero, he can't be right, he can't be—'

Legend grinned as he saw his counterpart begin to break down. It was time to end this pathetic battle once and for all. A spiked mace of rocks coalesced around him and he shot forward with unimaginable speed, planning to keep his momentum by rolling up the slopes of the lava court. Legend would have to hit the fool eventually, especially after he had finally begun to break him. Classic would finally pay dearly.

"SPYRO!"

Classic opened his eyes at Sparx's shout and looked up, mouth dropping as he barely dodged the barbed boulder. Realizing his counterpart was now likely dead-set on turning him into road kill, he managed to pull himself together enough to begin evading once again. Twice more, he evaded the sphere of minerals as it surfed the lava court like a skateboard park. He stopped his warping, however, when the rumbling of rock ceased.

Panicked, Classic whipped his head around to locate his assailant and, before Sparx could warn his companion, he was answered by a meteor that punched straight through the aqueous shell he'd set up. The water absorbed some of the impact and shattered Legend's mineral exterior as it rippled spasmodically, but Sparx once again fell to a dull green hue.

"Look what we have here. Tweedle-dim's shield wanes as I speak, and Tweedle-crazy isn't bringing enough animal sacrifices to support it. Only one more hit, and you're mine, hero."

Classic couldn't form a rebuttal from within his liquid shield, so his only response was to shed both the shattered and intact plates of ice, and fling them at his relentless tormentor. Legend was caught off guard by a lack of back-talk from his counterpart, and quaked from the impact of the dense glass-like icicles that shattered against his

chest. He slowly raised his glowing empty eyes to Classic and swore. "You slippery *bastard* . One too many times I ran my mouth and let you recuperate. I'll end you now, you *fucking excuse for a purple dragon!* "

Legend grinned sadistically once again as he felt an odd combination well up inside him. It was like when he had summoned the magma, but instead of a combination of fire and earth, this was a combination of fire and ice. *'Perfect!'*

Legend opened his maw, a massive stream of steam shooting at his counterpart and slamming against his water shield. Classic was caught off guard, unsure of what his counterpart was attempting to do. Much to his horror, he felt the water in his bubble begin to heat up.

'What!? No! My magic is supposed to keep the water from boiling! How!?'

Classic began to twitch as the water began to bubble, horrified that Legend was trying to boil him alive, his magic seemingly useless against what was allowing Legend's stream of searing steam to heat up the water. Legend couldn't help but feel elated at the victory he was about to attain, and the pain that his opponent would experience before forfeiting his life.

'No, no, no, no no! It can't end like this! What can I do?! I can't just freeze my shield, he'll just shatter me instead! I can't let this goddamned monster win against me, I... I...'

Classic opened his eyes, the look in them unlike anything anyone had seen before. The world slowed around him as every sense he had began to dull. All reasoning, all limitations, all morals... Everything was overridden in that one instant, and only one thing ran through Classic's mind. ***Survive . Survive at all cost.***

He returned to the shrill sound of pure agony. It took a second for Classic to realize what he'd done, and shame and horror washed

over him like a tsunami. Legend howled and writhed against the scalding water that drenched him, seeped through his scales, and forced itself into his body through his now open maw, burning him from the inside out and from the outside in. He couldn't even form the coherency to vilely curse his counterpart for the suffering he now endured.

Hunter raced to the scene, fearing the worst, and both he and Sparx witnessed the deed that Classic had committed. Before either of his friends could say a word, Spyro frantically scrambled to teleport his friends away from the horror show, struggling to turn away from the sight of his twin being tortured at his own paws for the crime of being absolutely right. After what seemed an eternity, the spell was finally ready, and Classic fled into the neighboring woods with his friends in tow.

Dark Spyro gasped, coughing searing water out of his lungs as his body shook violently from the results of the last assault.

"Damn, I underestimated him," he muttered. He hadn't thought the flea had it in him to kill. But that last attempt... Oh, the kid had it in him alright, buried deep. Probably under mounds of societal conditioning and personal disgust.

Dark Spyro smirked, a new plan unfolding in an instant. He'd break that brat, either by killing him or forcing him to kill. Pausing, he found that the thought of dying at Classic's hand didn't irk him. Thinking on it further, he realized that he found Classic to be a worthy adversary...when he would actually fight and not run like a coward. He had seen it, a flash in his eyes even as they were quickly hidden by disgust. The eyes of a predator. The eyes of a true dragon.

This fight had a new purpose, to drag the true dragon out of that coward kicking and screaming if need be. It didn't matter if he ended up dead for it. He had walked onto a battlefield; he had already accepted his fate.

Dying by that dragon's claws would be acceptable. And if the dragon inside his counterpart truly didn't want to come out and play anymore... Well, he'd have fun carving that whelp into steaks.

Classic Spyro, Hunter and Sparx watched as Legend looked around the battlefield for them. Classic could barely form any words, staring at the burn marks under Legend's dark scales that he had caused. He sank to the ground, hiding behind the foliage as he buried his head into his paws.

"I'm...I'm a monster."

Sparx turned to his best friend, raising an eyebrow. "What? Spyro, you're not—"

"Yes I am, Sparx! This whole entire loop, all I've done to this guy is tease him, embarrass him, broken his stuff, and torn him away from his friends because I didn't want to put up with Ember hitting on me!" Classic said, beginning to curl up into a ball. "And now...now..." His voice began to crack. "I...I tried to *kill* him! All this in the span of the few hours I've known this guy!"

Tears began to form in the corners of his eyes. "This isn't like when I fought all those other beings on my adventures! They were just creatures created by magic, and the few that weren't I usually just knocked out, but this...!"

Sparx and Hunter just stood dumbfounded. They had *never* seen their friend this distraught before, let alone actually *crying* . The duo looked at each other with faces curled in confusion as they tried to think of what to say.

"Spyro, listen... It's not like you had much of a choice. The guy was trying to kill you too. If you didn't do something, he would have succeeded," Hunter said, sitting down next to his friend.

"I can see why he was trying to kill me," Classic said coldly, unmoving. "After everything I did... I see why he hates me enough to

attempt it, and after what I just attempted to do, it might be justified..."

Sparx's face was blank as he hovered down next to his broken down friend. He flew in front of Classic's face, staring the dragon straight in the eyes...and smacked him over the head. Classic grabbed his forehead and stared at his friend.

"Sparx? Wh-what was—?"

"Listen to me," Sparx said firmly, starring Spyro in the eyes. "I met you before you even hatched from your egg. Ever since you hatched, I've been with you on your adventures, hovering by your side no matter what. In all that time I've known you, I can safely say you are *not* , and let me repeat that, *no t* a monster."

Classic was taken off guard by Sparx's sudden serious tone. He had never seen his friend acting this way before. "But...but I—"

"No buts." Sparx cut his friend off as he narrowed his eyes. "The only monster here is that psychopath out there for pushing you to that point. On top of that, unlike *him* , you feel terrible for attempting such a thing, while that beast out there is almost *giddy* every time he's come close so far."

Classic said nothing before he looked away from his friend. "...Even so, this whole mess is my fault in the first place. The whole reason this started was because I felt superior to my counterpart, and I just *had* to let him know it."

Sparx wasn't giving up that easily. Classic needed to snap out of it, and *fast* . "I know that you're feeling like a jerk right now, and it's understandable. But, if you were only a jerk and nothing else, why do you think your friends stand by your side?"

Upon hearing these words, Classic raised his head a bit.

"Spyro, let me explain why I stand by you. You may be an ass sometimes, but you care when others have a problem that they can't solve themselves. Remember when Ripto tried to conquer Avalar? You may have been there by coincidence, but that didn't stop you from helping everyone. You could have forced the inhabitants to give you orbs and talismans, but instead you solved the issues that they had, whether Ripto caused them or not. In their gratitude, Avalar trusted you with their magical possessions, and Ripto didn't stand a chance after that. Hunter, help me out here, will ya?"

Hunter took a seat next to the young dragon, taking Sparx's cue. "Sparx is right, you know. The realms in Avalar were always yelling at each other before you came along. Now they remember you and realize that, if all of Avalar can trust a purple dragon to stop an evil dictator, they should be able to agree more often." Hunter wasn't kidding. He was sincerely thankful for Spyro's arrival in Avalar, and he needed to know it.

"See? There's no reason why you should let this dragon get the best of you. You're smart enough to do crazy stuff with magic and your elements, and you're tough enough to last this long against your psycho duplicate. Ever since our first base loop—you, me, Hunter, Elora—we all earned the right to be called heroes of the Dragon Realms, Avalar, and the Forgotten Realms. Don't let a stranger, especially *that* monster sitting over there, tell you otherwise."

Classic was silent as he took in his friend's words, looking at them both blankly. Finally, a small smile began to appear on his face. "Sparx, Hunter, I know I don't say this often, but you guys are my best friends for too many reasons to count. This is just one of those reasons."

He rose to his paws and, while Sparx sat on his head, he slung his arm around Hunter as he gave him a noogie. It would have been an awesome moment to cherish between the trio...if Classic didn't notice a certain pair of dragons heading their way. Classic's eyes went wide as he saw Ember and Cynder running towards the battlefield that was once a park. *'Are you freakin' kidding me?!'*

"Guys! I'm sorry, but I need to take care of something ASAP!" Classic said, teleporting away before Hunter or Sparx could say anything.

Cynder could see the lava lake getting closer, the intense heat causing her to sweat. Despite being concerned for the wellbeing of one of the Spyros, Ember began to slow down as she saw the war torn battlefield. Gulping as bit her lip, she looked over to Cynder.

"Um, Cynder. I have bad feeling about this..."

"So do I," Cynder said, looking back towards Ember. "There's still time for you to turn back, you know. I should be able to handle things by myself."

"Um, well, I..."

Before Ember could finish her reply, a flash of polygons caught both dragonesses off guard. Before Cynder could realize what was going on, a purple dragon with three large scars across his chest appeared in front of them, narrowing his eyes.

"What are you two doing here!?" Classic demanded, stepping forward. Before either of the dragonesses could start talking, Classic was already working on his teleport spell.

Having been around her Spyro for who knows how many loops now, Cynder could tell that the dragon in front of her wasn't him. "What are *you* doing here? And what the heck is going on!?" Cynder demanded, stepping forwards as she narrowed her eyes.

"I'll tell you in a second! It's too dangerous right now!" Classic said as he began to glow.

Before either dragoness could say anything, the group was teleported back to where Hunter and Sparx were hiding. Though slightly disoriented from the teleport, Cynder quickly shook it off. She

narrowed her eyes and got in front of Classic's face with a scowl. Classic nearly tumbled backwards in the process.

"Alright, you have five seconds to tell me what's—"

" *Gah!* " Ember exclaimed, eyes wide as she saw the state Classic was in. "Spyro! What happened to— *mphf!* "

Before Ember could finish her concerned outburst, Hunter jumped forward and put his paw over her mouth.

" *Quiet! You want to get us all killed!? "* Hunter said in a forceful whisper.

" *Killed by what!? "* Cynder hissed, starting to growl at being locked out of the loop.

Classic narrowed his eyes before sighing in defeat. "Why don't you look for yourself?"

Cynder narrowed her eyes before she turned and poked her head out of the bush they were hiding behind. When she saw the dark dragon looking over the battlefield, her eyes went wide. "Spy —*gah!"*

Cynder was interrupted when she attempted to jump out and rush to her mate as she was grabbed by the tail and pulled back into the bush.

Legend paused for a second, his face going blank. *'Cynder...?'* He grabbed his head, shaking the thought off as his dark form refused to let him go.

Back in the bush, Cynder yanked her tail from Classic's mouth and had to resist the urge to smack him with it. She narrowed her eyes at the trio, her mouth curled in a scowl.

"What did you idiots do?" she demanded, her voice icy cold.

The entire group sans Ember flinched, but before anyone could say anything, Classic quickly stepped forward, his head hung low.

"Wait, it's not their fault..." Classic said, glancing away from the very angry dragoness. "I...I got in a fight with the other me. I was acting like a jerk to him the entire day, and then when he finally got fed up, I got cocky and challenged him to a battle. I continued to poke and prod him throughout the entire thing, and then when I used my magic to disguise myself as an egg to get in a cheap shot, he... Well, I think you can see what happened."

Classic looked back at Cynder and lowered his head. "I didn't mean for it to get *this* out of hand, though. All I want now is to stop him, bring him back to normal... But after everything I've done to him in the short span of this loop..."

Cynder growled, but as she looked at the incredibly guilty expression on Classic's face, she began to soften hers. Even if it wasn't her Spyro, he still looked almost identical to him, and seeing him this distressed worried her greatly. Taking a deep breath to compose herself, she looked at Classic with an indifferent expression. "How long has he been like this?"

Classic looked to the side. "Uh... I'm not sure. I wasn't really paying attention to the time while I was struggling to stay alive against him."

Cynder closed her eyes before looking back to the dark dragon flying around the battlefield. She put her paw in front of her mouth. Though she didn't know the exact amount of time, she knew this was the longest Spyro had spent in his dark state. She had no idea what that had done to his mental state, but nonetheless knew she at least had to try to bring him back.

"I think I can bring him out of his dark state," Cynder said, looking back at the group. "I've done it a few times before in our baseline."

"How can you be sure? What if you can't?" Classic said, raising his head. "You'll be putting yourself in danger."

Cynder shook her head, eyes closed as she let out a sigh. "Don't worry. Even if I can't bring him out of it, I don't think he'll even consider attacking me." She looked at Classic. "...And even if he does, I'll be able to defend myself. I've been by his side for a good portion of his adventures, even in the baseline, so I'm almost on par with him when it comes to fighting."

Classic stared at Cynder, contemplating the risk. This was all his fault, so he didn't want anyone getting hurt because of this. However, at the same time, he knew he had no chance of calming his counterpart down. Cynder said she had managed to pull him out of this before, but even though she assured him she could take care of herself, if things went horribly wrong...

He narrowed his eyes, looking back towards Hunter. "Hunter, keep an eye on Ember."

"Wai—what?" Hunter said, jumping slightly from the serious tone in Spyro's voice. "You're not seriously going in there without me!?"

"I don't want you getting hurt because of what I've done. He's already attempted to kill you once. Besides, someone has to make sure Ember doesn't get herself in trouble." Spyro rolled his eyes when he saw Ember's expression light up at the sound of him being concerned for her. Shaking his head, he looked Hunter straight in the eyes. "Please, Hunter."

Hunter was a bit surprised by the uncharacteristically serious look in Spyro's eyes. Though he didn't like it, he eventually shook his head. "Alright. Just make sure you don't end up getting yourself killed, alright?"

Classic nodded before turning towards Cynder. "You sure about this?"

"Very," Cynder replied, staring him straight in the eyes.

With a nod, Classic began to run his teleportation spell again.

"Um..."

Classic turned to Ember, his expression indifferent as she stared at them both with a concerned look. "Please be careful... both of you."

Classic nodded, giving a smirk. Cynder was a bit surprised, but, nevertheless, gave a warm smile. Not a second later, the two dragons disappeared in a flurry of polygons.

Back on the battlefield, Legend looked around with annoyance. If it weren't for the fact that this annoying little brat had piqued his interest, he would have likely turned the surrounding area into a crater by now. It was then he felt a presence behind him, sensing the energy that was being used to teleport. Legend could tell exactly who that was, but what he hadn't expected was the dragon that had teleported with him.

"Spyro!"

Legend froze, face going blank as he spun around. Sure enough, he was met with familiar black scales. His eyes widened with surprised and only one word escaped his lips. "Cynder..."

"Spyro, please!" Cynder said, stepping forward cautiously. "You need to stop this!"

Legend stood blankly, staring at the pleading black dragoness. "I-I..."

Legend shook his head before looking back at the duo, his expression caught between a variety of emotions. "How... I'm sorry, Cynder, but...how can I be sure it's you? This *magician* here has already tricked me several times today with his illusions. How can I be sure that this isn't some other trick he has up his sleeves?"

Cynder was taken aback by Legend's words. She frowned, eyes wide as she looked at her mate. "Spyro...it's me. How could you think I'm just an illusion?"

Legend frowned, closing his eyes tightly as he grabbed his head. For a second, Cynder saw a flash of purple scales through the darkness. She took another step forward. She knew that, despite how long he had been in this form, her Spyro was still in there somewhere, and that right now he needed her more than ever. Despite being a bit miffed over Legend's scepticism, she wasn't going to back down now.

Legend managed to open his eyes again, glancing at the approaching dragoness. To this, he took a few steps back.

"I'm sorry, Cynder, but...I just can't trust anything right now, especially with that magician behind you," Legend said, shooting a sharp glare towards Classic. "He's done nothing but mess with me all day, and not a few seconds ago he attempted to kill me."

"What!?"

Classic flinched at this, and Cynder looked back at him with a sharp glare. Before he could say anything to defend himself, Legend spoke up again.

"Oh, don't worry about that. I'm actually kind of happy he did," Legend said in an unnervingly enthusiastic voice, an unfitting smile on his dark face. "I thought this brat was just some kid, a poor excuse for what was supposed to be myself from another world. And yet, at the same time, what he attempted to do has filled me with hope. Hope that there may be a true dragon under that soft exterior, after all."

Cynder's eyes went wide as she looked at Legend. She had seen him in his dark state before, but never had he said something like that. They were no strangers to killing, having to do so just to survive the war in their world. Yet, to hear her mate proclaim such a thing so nonchalantly...

Cynder shook her head. She knew she needed to get Legend out of his dark form quickly before it had a permanent effect on his mental

state.

"Spyro, please! It's really me!" Cynder said, taking another step forward with pleading eyes. "Isn't there any way I can prove that I'm not just some sort of illusion?"

Legend looked on blankly for a few seconds before it finally hit him. Even if Classic had figured out that Cynder was of some importance to him, he had been with him all day. As such, even if he remembered what she looked like from back at the apartment, there was no way he could know what abilities she possessed.

He smiled and leaped back, calling to the lava to surround him. As he did, he replied, "Come inside. It shouldn't be more difficult than one of those purple gates. I'll talk only once you're inside."

The magma formed a near sphere intersected by the ground, with a small opening just too small to wiggle or force through. Lava surrounded it, making the option of digging non-applicable.

Cynder looked at the sphere with an indifferent expression. She realized what he wanted her to do. Looking back, she saw Classic looking at her in confusion, and she knew Ember was likely watching the battle from the bushes. She shook her head. As much as she would rather these people not find out about her past, saving Legend from his dark form was far, *far* more important to her. Without saying a word, she disappeared into her shadow, causing Classic to jump as said shadow quickly slipped through the magma sphere.

Legend watched in dawning happiness as the shadow slipped through and Cynder pulled herself out. It really was her! However, he held his jubilation back as he noticed her take him in with reserve. He was no fool as to why. They both hated to see the other like this, but it wouldn't be for much longer. He just needed to push his other just a bit more...and then he could be satisfied with the outcome, whatever it might be.

"Spyro," Cynder began, "what happened?"

Legend paused, not to determine what to leave out, but to figure out how to make it concise. "Well, after he dragged me out to the park, to get away from Ember, I snapped at him, he retorted, things got heated, and we both began preparing for a fight. I had thought him nothing more than an annoying brat who didn't understand the way the world worked; he thought me a complete stick in the mud who tried too hard to impress self-imposed laws onto others."

"He got right up into my face and all but challenged me to a fight. I asked if we should back up. He challenged me while standing his ground. I head-butted him. He backed up and we got to fighting. He kept the advantage by staying out of my preferred range, no matter what I seemed to do, annoying me the entire time, but I used the Earth Arena Trap and got some well-deserved payback. He broke out with some sort of trick from his Subspace, and started firing things at me. I used the Gold Armor and started to use my higher elemental powers, but the slippery whelp was still really hard to hit, so I used Dragon Time. Somehow he copied it. Ihy made us both stop using it."

And then...he used an egg against me. His magic made him look like an egg, and I fell for it. And when he broke the spell and the egg shattered...I just... I kept remembering *that* Loop...how, even with foreknowledge of the attack, I couldn't make a difference..."

Here, Dark Spyro's began to raise his voice as he got more emotional. "But it wasn't just that! He had been treating the whole thing like it was a game! Like he didn't understand the power he was using and just what might could happen if he ever lost control! He just kept that cocky grin and acted like he was the best thing since the First Dragons discovered the elements!" Then his countenance morphed into a feral grin. "But when I saw the look in his eyes...both of them—he knows he can kill, he knows what he's capable of.

"He's just like us. He just hides it well."

"Then do you want to continue?!" Cynder asked incredulously.

Legend paused as if actually thinking on it for the first time.

"I don't know," he replied finally. "Until you asked, I thought I did. I thought I wanted to see what he was like when he was actually serious for once in his life. When he actually admitted he knew what stepping onto a battlefield means...but now, what would that accomplish? He's already shown himself to be far more than what I originally thought him to be. ...Maybe, a part of me just wanted to die, to see if that would actually end the Loops."

"You know it won't work like that," Cynder replied.

"Intellectually, yes," Legend agreed. "And I would never allow myself to die in our world and allow Malefor to win. But here, with another Purple to 'guide the fate of the era?' Another who does understand the burden and who has not yet buckled... I think part of my heart wanted to see the value of the other Loopers' words."

Here, Cynder became mad. "And what of me?! Was I just supposed to pretend that you were of no importance?! That I would just move on as if nothing had ever happened?! As if we were nothing?!"

"You would have finally been able to move on," Legend replied mournfully. "Never to reawaken as that beast, that slave to the apes. You could finally be happy. That small, selfish part of my heart seemed to think my life a fair enough trade for that."

Cynder couldn't take it anymore. She slapped him as hard as she could across the head with her tail. "Idiot!"

Then she pulled him close. "It's when I'm with you that I'm happiest. So long as we are together, nothing is too much a burden."

"Cynder..."

Cynder gave a warm smile before putting her wings and forelegs around Dark Spyro. The dark dragon froze for a few seconds, his face blank. Finally, he closed his eyes before putting his forelegs

gently around Cynder. Dark Spyro took a deep breath, and his dark scales began to fade away.

Classic looked up at the sphere of magma, eyes wide as seconds passed. His mind raced with what could possibly be going on in there. All he could hear was the buzzing of Sparx's wings. Classic shook his head.

'Why is this taking so long? What's going on in there?' he thought as he looked back up at the sphere. That wasn't the only thing that was bugging him, though.

"I thought this brat was just some kid, a poor excuse for what was supposed to be myself from another world. And yet, at the same time, what he attempted to do has filled me with hope. Hope that there may be a true dragon under that soft exterior, after all."

A true dragon... *'The heck did he mean by that?'*

"Spyro?" Sparx asked, looking down towards his friend.

Classic shook his head. He knew *something* was going on in there. They were likely talking about him, and he was going to find out what. Reaching into his Subspace, he pulled out a golden orb. When Sparx saw this, his eyes went wide.

"Spyro!? What are you doing!?"

Without saying a word, Classic took to the air and flew as close as he could to the magma sphere without burning himself. It was hard to hear them over the boiling lava, but he was determined nonetheless. Sparx floated next to him, narrowing his eyes.

"Spyro, I don't think this is such a goo—"

Sparx was silenced when Classic hushed him, motioning for the dragonfly to land on his head so he could hear better. As Sparx

reluctantly did so, he began to hear the two dragons talking.

"But when I saw the look in his eyes...both of them—he knows he can kill, he knows what he's capable of. He's just like us... He just hides it well."

Classic cringed, the memory of what he had almost done still fresh in his mind. *'Just like them... The heck...?'*

Before Classic could complete his thoughts, the ground below began to sizzle. The molten streams of magma began to cool, turning into smooth obsidian and giving more of a foothold once again. Not a second later, Classic saw that the sphere was starting to sink back into the ground. Realizing this, Classic quickly flew back to where he had been standing originally.

As the sphere touched down, the magma started to flow back into the earth, cooling into obsidian as it touched the ground. Standing where it had once been, Cynder held Legend close to her, his purple scales once again visible. Classic blinked for a few seconds, his face blank as he watched the scene.

Legend pulled his head up, looking at the chaos he had caused. All around him, the once peaceful looking park had now devolved into what appeared to be something more akin to the Burned Lands. He frowned, lowering his head. It was only then he noticed his counterpart standing a ways away, extremely battered and bruised, with massive scars sprawled across his chest. He tried to look away, but the thought of how badly he had lost it refused his hope of blotting it out.

Not a second later, he saw Ember and Hunter push their way out of the bushes, moving cautiously towards him. Legend cringed, knowing they had witnessed him making a complete monster out of himself.

He closed his eyes tightly, hoping to just blot it out. Finally, he felt Cynder let him go. Cynder... He could only imagine what she thought

of him after that display. Finally, Legend couldn't take it anymore. Opening his eyes, he darted off as fast as his paws could carry him.

"Wha— *Spyro!* " Cynder said, quickly getting to her paws to chase after him.

Classic watched the two dragons dart off with an indifferent expression. It was only after the two were almost out of sight that Classic finally realized just *how much pain* he was really in. He cringed, nearly falling onto the ground as he struggled to keep his paws.

'Jeez, I guess that shield was more so a glorified painkiller than anything else,' he thought, having a hard time just staying upright.

"Spyro?"

"Yeah, Sparx?" Classic said, having to force out his words through his pain.

He noticed as Sparx gestured to either side of him. Classic looked, only now noticing his friend and number one fangirl were by his side. Classic said nothing, far too tired to even flinch at the sight of her. Ember looked at Classic with wide eyes and a soft frown.

"Spyro... You're going to be okay, right?" she asked, her voice a bit shaky.

Seeing the obvious concern written all over her face, Classic managed to force a cocky grin. "I just need some rest is all. Don't worry about me, I've been through worse be- *fore* !" Classic said, trying his best to downplay his injuries, but a jolt of pain betrayed his attempt as it caused him to flinch.

"Ah, Spyro!" Ember said, quick to help her idol keep his balance. "Spyro, are you sure? Those gashes—"

"I can take care of it, alright?" Classic said, looking at Ember out of the corner of his eye. He flinched when he saw her back up and avert her eyes. Admittedly, thanks to the pain he was in, his words had come out a lot colder than he had intended.

Hunter shook his head, kneeling down to Spyro's level. "Do you need help getting home?"

Spyro shook his head. "I can teleport home," he said flatly.

Noticing the concerned look Hunter was giving him, he lowered his head. He didn't mean to brush their concern off. It was just that, right now, all he wanted was to return to his loop home and sleep the rest of the day away.

It was only then that Classic noticed something shimmering not far off—a golden chest plate, somehow undamaged despite the chaos that had just occurred. Classic lowered his head, remembering the damage he had done to the enchantments on it. There was likely no way he could make up for pushing his counterpart so far, but maybe...

"Actually, if you two want to help me," Classic said, using his telekinesis to pull the chest plate over to him. "I need help finding these pieces of armor scattered around here. I need them for something."

Putting the chest plate into his Subspace, he noticed the confused glances the others gave each other. Nonetheless, they quickly nodded their heads and began to comb the battlefield. Classic could barely move as he looked around, the pain from the trio of scars making him flinch every time he took a step. He tried to push it to the back of his mind as he looked for the pieces of armor, but even then the multiple bruises, scars and burns made it an uphill battle.

Noticing his best bud wincing every time he took a step, Sparx was about to ask what was wrong, but before he could, Hunter and Ember had returned with his requested items.

Putting the items in his Subspace, Classic managed to force a smile. "Thanks guys, you're the best. I think I can figure things out from here. Be careful heading back, alright?"

The group smiled, nodding as they began to part ways. Classic was about to as well, but he paused when he noticed Ember. He kept his eyes on her as she walked away. *'All this started because I used my counterpart as an excuse to blow her off...for the thousandth time in a row.'* He lowered his head. *'Come to think of it, just how many loops has she been through alone because I went out of my way to avoid her when I found out she was looping? I was never alone thanks to Sparx always looping with me, but...'*

"...Ember, wait!"

Sparx jumped in surprised when he heard Spyro call out his fangirl's name. He glanced down at his friend, eyes wide. *'Spyro must have taken more of a beating than I thought...'*

Classic watched as Ember jumped at the sound of him calling her name. He was actually rather surprised when she turned around with a genuine look of surprise on her face, an action which caused him to flinch. "Yeah, Spyro...?"

The purple dragon sighed deeply, fighting every instinct that was telling him to keep his mouth shut and run for the hills. Despite how much he disliked affection, he wasn't going to blow Ember off this time.

"Ember... I'm sorry I went so long without telling you I was looping too," Classic said, hobbling closer to his fangirl despite what the back of his mind was screaming. "I'm lucky to have you as a looper. I know you care a lot about me, and if I had just accepted it, then this whole thing wouldn't have happened. I'm... I'm sorry."

Ember stared blankly at her idol for several seconds. In truth, multiple things were running through her mind at the moment. Some screaming 'yes' at the top of their lungs, some that wanted her to

tackle the object of her affections in a hug...and yet, there was something at the back of her mind, something that was nagging her above all else. A realization that finally had hit her over all these loops. Finally, surprisingly, the pink dragoness just gave a soft smile.

"...You know, Cynder told me something, about you and I. She hadn't meant to say it so bluntly, but in a way, I'm glad she did," Ember said, lowering her head. "Spyro... All this is just as much my fault as it is yours. I've been pushing too hard to have a relationship with you, despite how uncomfortable it was making you..." Ember raised her head, her eyelids drooping.

"Spyro... I still have feelings for you, and I doubt they'll ever go away any time soon," Ember said, shaking her head. "But...I don't want to force you into this just because I feel this way. For now, until you decide if you'd ever even consider it...is it alright if we were just friends?"

Classic paused, his face blank. Several seconds passed before a soft smile appeared on his face.

"Yeah. I'd like that. It'd be easier for both of us, I'm sure of that."

Both dragons shared a short-lived giggle before Ember gave Classic one last look. With a soft smile, she turned away and began to head back to her loop home. Classic looked on for few seconds with a smile before he turned to Sparx. The dragonfly had a completely dumbfounded look on his face.

"Tell me, Spyro. At *any* point in that battle, did I get hit on the head?"

Classic busted up laughing, though he quickly stopped because of the pain it caused him thanks to his wounds. Classic shook his head before looking at Sparx.

"Nah, Sparx. That really just happened," Classic said, sitting down. "I can hardly believe it myself. I guess...I guess I needed to address that at some point, and seeing how not doing so before caused

things to spiral into what happened here... I dunno, maybe I'm just a bit out of it right now after the beating I took."

Sparx chuckled before looking at his friend with a smile. He couldn't help but feel a sense of pride. He had been with his friend since birth and always liked to think that, of their pair, he had a more level head. Yet, seeing Spyro finally starting to take some form of responsibility, he couldn't help but grin. It went to show that, despite their bodies not aging thanks to the loops, they were still growing in one way or another.

"So, then. Want me to follow you home for the night to make sure you're okay?" Sparx asked, floating down in front of Classic.

Classic shook his head. "Nah, I already told you, I'm fine. Besides, didn't you mention how you have your own family this loop? They're probably wondering where you and your counterpart are right now."

"Yeah, yeah," Sparx said, though he placed his hand to his chin as he looked up to the sky. "Ya know, now that you mention it, what *has* my wimpy counterpart been doing while all this madness was going on...?"

"C'mon! You obviously got this! Solve the darn puzzle!" Legend Sparx yelled. He may not have known much about the technology-thingies of this world, but so far he had found one thing he liked. How he had gone this long without discovering the wonders of television, he would never know. "No! Don't be greedy by spinning! You idiot!"

Ihy groaned, taking a sip of his beer. He was beginning to wonder what was worse: returning to go back to work on Yggdrasil, or staying here and listening to Legend Sparx yammer on at the TV. *'I regret ever turning the TV on in the first place!'*

(A/N: And there we have it. The end of Classic and Legends battle. This chapter is a bit longer than the usual, hence why it took a while to upload, but considering it was the climax to this battle, it's understandable.

Riv told me that Dark Spyro seemed a bit too reasonable in this chapter, saying that she viewed Dark Spyro as rather feral when it came to his mentality. She did tell me that it was mostly just alternate character interpretation though, and consider Ukelele, AbZ, and I didn't seem it too amiss while writing this, hopefully you didn't think it was too OOC either. Plus, there was the fact that had Dark Spyro been more feral, things likely wouldn't have gone as well for the Classic group as they -relatively- did, nor could we have gotten some interesting plot points for later chapters. As such, I hope you forgive this bit of character interpretation if you found it a bit odd.

Anyways, this is by no means the end of the current arc. We still have a bit of shenanigans planned with character interactions, and an interesting way to end off this arc. For those of you who are missing the usual looper shenanigans the Infinite Loops are known for, I'm considering uploading some 'filler' chapters in the meantime that fall more in line with the earlier chapters and the shenanigans that happened in them. My main worry is that I might end up spoiling stuff from the current arc though so... I don't know. Leave me a review stating if you would like some filler looper shenanigans, or if you'd prefer us to continue with the current arc as is with no fillers.

Anyways, how will things go after the fight? Will the two Spyro's be able to reconcile? How will their in loop parents react to their injuries? And exactly why *is* Legend Spyro so uptight about looper shenanigans? Find out soon!)

Reconciliation (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

(Fused loop 1.1 continued)

(Feat: TokoWH, AbZHz101, and UkeleleNarwhal)

The sky was a radiant shade of orange as Classic teleported back in front of his house. The rather modest building was sandwiched between two larger buildings that contained a collection of shops and corporate offices, which resided in the higher floors. Classic took a deep breath before he huddled towards his house. With the key he was given before he left, he unlocked the door and headed inside. He paid no attention to his surroundings as he walked through the living room, making a beeline for his room.

'So tired... Feel like I can sleep for a week...' he thought to himself as he forced his aching body along.

"You had a good time out there? Obviously you did. You're filthy, and you decided to stay out after dark."

Classic jumped slightly from the voice, turning his head to see a blue dragon sitting in a chair not far off, her face torn between anger and worry.

'CRAP!' Classic thought, eyes going wide. *'I forgot!'*

Classic gulped, his mind telling him to quickly set up a teleportation spell and head for the hills. However, once his eyes met his loop mother's, all semblance of conspiracy and rebellion ceased, replaced with fear, compliance and respect.

"Well, then. Mind telling your dear, old, worried-sick mother what you were up to all this time?" Nina asked, narrowing her eyes.

Classic quickly averted his eyes, biting his lip. Obviously there was no way in heck he was going to tell her about the deathmatch he and his twin had gotten into, so he needed to come up with a reasonable alibi, and *fast* .

"I was, well, out at the skate park and I messed up a trick. Real badly," Classic lied through his teeth, scratching the back of his head as he did so.

Nina's expression was unchanging. She could see the obvious nervous ticks on her son and wasn't buying his story for a second. "Uh-huh. And where exactly was your brother in all of that?"

'Crap!' Classic thought, glancing down. "I, uh... I...don't know..."

Nina sighed. "What did I say about sticking together last week? We've been over this and now it's even more important. There are criminals around and, just earlier, I heard on the news that something happened at the park," Nina said, jabbing her claw at the television behind her. "What if your brother was there? What would have happened then?"

'He would have tried to kill me. Twice *, '* Classic deadpanned in his head.

Nina's expression quickly shifted more towards worry as she eyed her son, the dim lights in the room making it a bit hard to see. "You really don't know where your brother is?"

Classic shook his head. Nina quickly got out of her chair not a second later.

"I'm calling his friend. Cynder, wasn't it? She's pretty close; she might have an idea where he is," Nina said before looking back towards her son with a stern expression. "In the meantime, you stay *right there* . I'm not done with you."

Classic watched as Nina hurried over to a phone. Just when she was out of earshot, Classic let out a sigh. He hated having parents during a loop...

Legend continued to hobble semi-aimlessly, his mind forced to replay those terrible events again and again. He had almost killed on no less than three separate occasions and had only had his will defied by chance! While he might have previously been angry with his counterpart, nothing that the other dragon had done had merited death. Nor had anything merited his attack on Hunter, whose worst offence could be summed up as defending a friend.

He constantly winced as he continued to force his battered body beyond its limits. It was nothing short of a miracle that no one had been killed, and that the only two who were truly seriously injured were the instigating parties. His very bones creaked and his legs continued to shake, protesting the continued abuse; if he continued for much longer, he would break at least one bone, or more than likely more. It was always painful having to reset such injuries, though his 'profession' meant that he was more than familiar with battlefield medicine. Now where was a ditch to lie in for the night?

"Spyro!"

He turned his head, staggering slightly, to see Cynder running towards him with Ember following tentatively behind. Spyro turned back the way he was heading and tried to continue on. However, he immediately fell to the pavement as his abused body refused to put up with this for one more minute.

"Spyro!" Cynder yelled again, seeing him go down. "Why do you keep running away from me?" she asked as she came up to him.

"Why would you want to be around me after what I just did?" Legend replied remorsefully.

"Do I really have to answer that?" Cynder replied, nuzzling him slightly.

Ember watched, shocked at how...comfortable they both were in the other's presence.

"Hey! What are you kids doing here?" a loud call came from across the block. They turned to see an adult dragon in a police uniform coming toward them.

There was a brief moment of panic and each of the three contemplated fleeing, but Legend's body still refused to move. Cynder, noticing this, held her ground. Whatever else happened today, they would face it together. Ember actually raised a foot before noticing that neither Cynder nor Legend were moving.

Inside her head, she had a mental war trying to figure out what to do. On one hand, she really didn't want to get caught if they were going to be accused for having something to do with the remodeling of the park. But she didn't want to leave Cynder, either. Though, Cynder had done that freaky thing with her shadow and Ember wasn't sure how, and she had been told that if Cynder had an element it would be Wind... And Cynder was just so reluctant to tell her anything! It was just so frustrating!

But what Cynder had told her had actually gotten her Spyro willing to talk to her... And then she thought about the wounds that her Spyro had endured, the ones on this Spyro, her Spyro saying that it was his fault, and the fact that she had just hidden in the bushes while Cynder and her Spyro had risked their lives to stop the chaos. She was tired of being useless.

"Officer!" she called back. "Hurry, please! Our friend is hurt and we can't carry him home!"

At that, the adult dragon picked up his pace, closing the distance and finally getting a good look at Legend. The purple dragon's eyes were slightly unfocused, he was collapsed on the ground, and he had

multiple visible injuries peppered across his body, but even like that he gave off an aura of determination. The police dragon wouldn't have been surprised if he had a concussion, though thankfully it looked to be minor. It was amazing that he was still conscious!

Briefly, he entertained the thought that these kids might have been involved with the scene at the park, but quickly dismissed that thought. They were far too young to wield that kind of power. Heck, he couldn't think of one dragon not out of ancient folktales that could to be comparable to that level of power. No, it would be far more likely that it was a large scale operation by a major crime syndicate.

"Which of your houses is closer?" the officer asked sharply.

"Ours is," Ember replied automatically.

The adult dragon nodded. "Okay, help me get him onto my back. I'll escort you home."

Nodding, Ember and Cynder did their best to gently lift Legend onto the police dragon's back.

Classic sighed and looked over to Nina, who was currently talking on the phone. He hadn't found the courage just to teleport away. He didn't exactly know why he couldn't find the courage to do so, especially considering it wouldn't matter after the loop ended. Maybe it was because of how things worked in this loop. There were times when it felt like some sort of outside force was poking at the back of his mind during certain loops. Classic shook his head, flinching a bit from the pain as he did so.

"Edna, how are you? ... Yes, yes, you too. ... Actually, I wanted to talk to your daughter, Cynder. ... Yeah, something came up with my sons, and I need to know where Spyro is. ... No, I'm talking about the one who comes over to your house and plays with Cynder, not the one who goes skateboarding. ... Oh? ... Oh... OK, alright, call me if he shows up. Thank you."

Nina hung up and returned her focus on her son, who winced at whatever she had planned. At this, she sighed. *'It's just so difficult to stay mad at him. He's too sensitive, and it doesn't help that he's the most immature of my sons.'*

With that, her expression softened as she approached him. "Okay, honey, let's see the damage."

"Wha-?"

As Classic's loop mother closed in, he froze in panic. *'What do I do, I can't run away, but what about my twin, and WHA—?!'*

He was interrupted from his internal rambling as he was carefully raised in the air.

Nina narrowed her eyes to inspect her son's injuries. What she didn't expect, however, was the sheer severity of said injuries. Once she laid eyes on the caked, oozing scars that ran across her son's chest, her eyes went wide before they met his. Classic paused before he gave a sheepish grin. Several seconds passed in silence.

'...Wow, she's taking this better than I thought.'

Not a second later, a shrill scream of horror shook the surrounding area, managing to set off a few alarms with its pitch and force. Classic winced. He didn't know what to expect next, but he had hunch that, whatever it was, he knew that he wouldn't be winning any awards for "Son of the Year."

To say the awkwardness in the room was thick would be an understatement. Legends laid on the floor, daring not to move lest he aggravate any of his wounds. Cynder sat next to him, a concerned look on her face. That was, by no means, what made it awkward, though, not by a long shot.

"Sir, I can assure you, these *children* are in no way associated with any major crime rings," Ember's mother said to the officer.

"...Very well, ma'am," the officer said. "Have a good evening."

Ember watched as the police officer began to walk off, but she noticed that, just before her mother closed the door, the police officer took one last look at them. Ember shivered, but was quickly knocked back to reality when she noticed her mother looking down at her.

"Well, then," her mother said, giving a gentle yet firm look towards her daughter. "Mind explaining to me what happened?"

Ember averted her eyes, backing up slightly as she did. "Um...well... You see..."

Ember gulped, looking up at her mother. *'What am I supposed to do!? I can't tell her the dragon currently in the living room is partially responsible for what happened at the park! I can't lie, though... I'm terrible at lying...'*

"We were nearby the park today," Cynder said, causing both Legend and Ember to look at her with wide eyes.

Their loop mother jumped with surprised when Cynder said that. "Oh my gosh! You three were near all that chaos today!? Are you alright!?"

"Most of us," Cynder replied, motioning towards Legend. Looking back to her loop mother, she managed to keep an unchanging expression. "We...we really didn't get to see what was causing all that, but we did end up getting a bit too close. There was flowing lava everywhere, as well as tons of giant pillars. While we were trying to get away, one of them collapsed on us." Cynder turned back to Legend. "Spyro managed to push us out of the way of it in time, but...I think you can see the results."

Their loop mother listened on in wide-eyed horror. "Oh dear! At least he's still alive." She narrowed her eyes. "Wait...why does he have burn marks, then, while you two don't?"

"The lava was funneling after us," Cynder continued to lie through her teeth, managing to flow with the contradictions to her story without letting on that she was making it up. "Luckily, the debris from the pillar managed to keep it from hitting him, but it was close enough that the heat from it alone was enough to leave burn marks. I managed to fly in and get him out of there before it could burn me, after which we got out of there as fast as we could."

Ember listened in disbelief at how effortlessly Cynder had crafted that story on the spot. She turned to her mother, who, despite having a look of apprehension on her face, was more relieved than anything else.

"Is this true?" she asked, turning to Legend.

"Yeah," he managed to force out, looking up at Ember's mother. "It all happened so fast that we didn't realize what was going on until it was too late."

Ember looked on blankly as Legend spoke—how he effortlessly managed to catch on without skipping a beat. She look up to her mother, whose eyes were closed as she breathed a sigh.

"Well, the important thing is you're both alive," she said, giving a smile. "I'll call Nina. She'll probably want you to come home as quick as possible."

"Um, if it's alright with you, I'd rather spend the night here..." Legend said, lowering his head. "It'd be easier to list everything on me that *doesn't* hurt right now, so I don't really want to move if I don't have to..."

"I'm sorry, Spyro. But your mother's worried sick about you. She called earlier asking about you, and with you like this right now, she'll

probably want to get you to a doctor as quick as possible."

Spyro lowered his head in defeat as he watched Ember's mom walk away towards a phone. Cynder looked at him, not being fooled for a second. She could tell the real reason he didn't want to return was because he didn't want to face his counterpart again after what he'd done. She closed her eyes and nuzzled her mate softly. Legend managed to force a small smile, though it was quickly wiped off by a sharp, shooting pain.

Ember looked at the duo in silence. There was so much more going on here that they weren't telling her; after how effortlessly they'd managed to craft that lie, she was sure of it. Cynder seemed especially dodgy about questions aimed at her, or the specific details of what her world was like. Ember didn't know why it irked her as much as it did, but...

Ember shook her head, turning away from the duo as she tried to push it to the back of her mind. It was their right to not go into what their world was like if they didn't want to, and it wasn't right to pry if they didn't want her to know... No matter how much it bugged her. She glanced back towards the duo, her expression unchanging. Hopefully, in time, they would begin to open up...

Classic winced as rubbing alcohol was applied to his wounds, the scent of disinfectant plaguing the air and gauze littering the floor. Nina hovered over her son and mumbled as she tried to perform something resembling first-aid.

"Unbelievable... How could this happen from a skating accident? Were you wearing a helmet?"

Classic didn't respond. Not because he was worried he'd say something snarky like 'somehow, I doubt a helmet would have helped much', but because he simply *couldn't* from inside his new cocoon of cotton. Honestly, answering wouldn't have helped at all,

anyway, so he kept his mouth shut as Nina continued to spray stinging alcohol at his cuts.

"Well, if you're not going to answer me, I'll have to set up an appointment. I'm not a doctor, so we can't be too careful..."

At this, his eyes widened. *'If a professional diagnoses me, Mom won't believe my skateboard alibi at all. I have to figure out something...'*

Classic raced through his fatigued brain, trying to concoct another plan. That is, until he realized that he'd actually thought of Nina as 'Mom.' Attempting to digest this development proved fatal to his thought process, so he just lay in a shocked trance until his mother's medical procedure was interrupted by another series of rings from the telephone. She dropped the cloth and spray bottle from her claws, eager to answer.

"Oh! Maybe it's your brother! Don't move a muscle!" Nina said, racing to the line. Nina grasped the earpiece and gasped out a greeting.

"Hello?! ... Edna! Did you find... YOU DID?! That's wonderfu—! ... No, oh no... Oh, my poor babies! ... Yes, my son is at home too... THE POLICE?! ... Oh, thank goodness. ... No, I'll call Flash, thank you for the offer, though. ... I know, I wish I knew too... Bye." Nina aimed a tear-streaked glare at her bandaged child. Her unintentional prediction had come true and she was livid.

"SEE?! See what happens when you two split up?! Your brother got burned by the lava in the park, just like I said! Maybe next time you'll both listen when I say 'stick together!'"

Classic was finally snapped out of his reverie and was also pushed a few inches back from the force of his mother's tirade. On the inside, he felt horrible for what he and his brother had put this caring dragoness through. Even though she wasn't his mother in the base loop, Classic felt like he'd known her all his life... In fact, he could

vaguely recall the last time he had actually fallen off his skateboard and how his mother overreacted then. He sighed. He couldn't stand to see his mother like this.

Classic quickly shook his head. *'Woah, wha—? That was weird...'*

How could he recall events he had never experienced before? Part of him wanted to check the back of his mind for any more false memories like that, but he knew now was not the time.

"I'm calling your father to pick your brother up. Then, the appointment. In the meantime, you can think about how much you worried me and why you should take my advice." At that, Nina picked up the phone and began another exchange, sniffling as she waited for the call to be picked up.

A portly dragon wearing a polo and tie sat at his desk, taking in a moment of solace after his rather difficult day at the office. Usually, he would be gathering his belongings and taking the portal transit back home, but now it was nap time. At least, it *was* nap time, until his phone rang out in protest of his fatigue. Picking up the call, Flash waited for a voice. He immediately sat up straight, however, when he heard sniffles on the other end.

"Nina? Is that you?" he asked, concern obvious in his voice.

"Yes, Flash. Something horrible happened, and I need you to pick up Spyro at Cynder's house," Nina managed to force out in between sobs.

"What happened and why are you crying? Did they get hurt?"

"...please, Flash. Just bring Spyro and come home."

"...I understand. I love you, OK? Everything will be fine, don't worry." More sounds of grief echoed through the speaker, and Flash decided

to close the call. He had a job to do, a job for his family. Sleep could wait.

Instead of thinking of his actions, Classic was starting to go through a mental breakdown. Once he and his brother stepped paw in the hospital, it was game over. The doctor would do what he does best, and then there would be questions. Questions that should never, ever be asked.

'Why did I have to start this all in the first place? Now the both of us are gonna be thrown in juvenile detention, and if we break out, we'll be fugitives! No amount of magic could fix that...' Classic stared at his mother, who was sobbing at the phone, until an idea dawned upon him. *'Or could it?'*

Tuning his magic sense, he trained his focus on the telephone that was mounted to the wall. He pinged it with a small packet of magic and it responded by producing a blue translucent panel with the words:

"InsomniacIncTelephonyModelWR467-telephone

Ready for maintenance, enter a command.

[#!]_"

Classic looked from the telephone's message to his broken mother. He hated the idea of leading her on like this, but for every non-looper's sake, no one should ever find out about the loops unless they were awake. Gathering his resolve, Classic began to commandeer the home's telephone lines.

"[#!]block outgoing calls

Calls blocked.

[#!]show all enchantments

Telephony. emt

Contacts. emt

[#!]_"

Classic decided to run the answering machine and set it up with an infinitely looping path whenever a call was made. *'There, that should keep her from reaching the doctor. Now for my twin...'*

"[#!]run Telephone. emt

Created and distributed by Insomniac Inc. Working day and night, for you!

[#!]run Contacts. emt

Flash

Edna

Hunter

Red

[#!]call Edna"

Nina resolved to compose herself and attempted to stop hyperventilating. She had to be strong for her sons. There was no way that she could call the doctor, not in her current emotional state. Meanwhile, Classic was waiting for the other end to pick up, and prayed that sound would not come forth from the speaker when it did. Thankfully, he saw text being written on the panel with the words: "Calling, please wait."

Classic let out a sigh of relief. *'Sweet, sweet silence.'*

A loud ring broke the tension in the room and Legend would have jumped at the sound had it not been for his aching body. Ember's mother picked up the phone and her eyes widened. Legend wondered what she could be doing with the strange device in her claws, but he didn't have to wonder any longer when she walked to the sofa and handed him the plastic object.

"It's for you."

"Um...thank you?" Legend said, taking the strange object in both claws.

As Edna walked away, Legend continued to just stare at the plastic device in front of him. He looked at Cynder, who appeared to be equally dumbfounded over what this strange thing was for. It didn't take long for both dragons to look at Ember for an answer, the pink dragoness chuckling at the sight.

"It's a telephone. You hold it up to your ear and the other end to your mouth, and it lets you talk to people far away," Ember explained.

Legends paused at her explanation before looking down at this 'telephone.' Who would be wanting to talk to him from far away? Why didn't they just seek him out like a normal being would? Regardless, heeding Ember's words, he held the plastic device up to his ear. "Uh...hello?"

It was then he heard a giggle from Ember. She took the phone from him and turned it the *correct* side up. Legend paused before trying again. A familiar voice sounded from the object, and Legend suddenly wished that he was deaf.

"Hey, d—... *twin* , you there?"

Legend paused, expression flattening as he glanced over to the odd device out of the corner of his eye. "...Why are you talking to me? Is this actually you, or is this one of those magic tricks?"

"No, it's actually me," Classic replied on the other end, his voice having a serious tone to it. "You're using a telephone, and...never mind. I have to ask you something."

"And what's that?" Legend asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Did you lie about what happened?"

Legend paused, making sure Ember's mother wasn't around to overhear them. Once he was sure they were alone, he lowered his voice to a whisper. "...Yes."

"Good. What did you say?"

"Ember, Cynder and myself were at the park, trying to run from flowing lava when a pillar fell on me," Legend said in a whisper. "It knocked the wind out of me for a bit, and streams of lava started to flow around me, which was what gave me these burns." Despite not being able to see his counterpart at the moment, he could just sense that he had winced from that line. "Luckily, Cynder managed to get me out before anything serious happened to me."

"...Alright, I can work with this. Stick to your story when you come home, and remember: we can never explain loops to any non-loopers. Capiche?" Classic said, his voice taking a surprisingly serious tone.

"...What does 'capiche' mean?"

He heard his counterpart sigh on other end of the phone, an act that caused Legend to frown in annoyance.

"Do you *understand* ?" Classic asked again.

"...I understand."

"Alright, see you soon."

A monotonous tone bleated through the speaker and Ember pulled the phone away, believing that the call had ended. Curious, she looked at Legend. "So, who was it?"

Legend paused for a bit, digesting what had just occurred a moment ago. "It was your Spyro," he finally replied, his tone indifferent.

"He called you, just now? What did he say?" Ember asked, raising an eyebrow.

"He asked me if I lied, and he's trying to help me."

At this, Cynder connected the dots as to what was happening when her mate began talking to the weirdly-shaped object next to his head. She gave a soft smile. "Well, it doesn't seem like he has hard feelings about what happened. That's good, isn't it?"

Legend turned to Cynder with a small frown. "I don't know. From what I can tell, he's only doing this to keep others from knowing about the loops."

"If he hated you that much, though, then he wouldn't have called in the first place."

Both Legend-branch loopers looked at Ember. She gave a soft smile.

"Listen. I know that my Spyro can be a bit stubborn and mischievous. Even though I still like him regardless, even *I* have to admit that," Ember said, chuckling slightly. Shaking her head, she looked back at the two dragons. "However, I know for a fact that he's not the kind of dragon who holds grudges."

"How can you be so sure?" Legend asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Because," Ember said, giving a wink. "I've read about his adventures so much that I know them almost as well as he knows them himself, and there are plenty of stories I can tell you that prove my point. For example, there was Bianca. She was an apprentice to

the Sorceress, an evil witch who kidnapped the dragon eggs on the Year of the Dragon."

Legend winced when Ember mentioned how the dragon eggs were stolen, but a quick pat on his paw from Cynder was enough to calm him down.

"Bianca spent most of my Spyro's adventure there taunting him, as well as causing general trouble. However, when she found out what the Sorceress was planning to do with the dragon eggs, she was horrified and went to my Spyro to help him. Despite everything she had done up to that point, my Spyro was more than willing to let her join them, and with her help, they managed to rescue all the remaining eggs and beat the Sorceress," Ember explain, a bit of fan-girlish excitement in her words.

Shaking her head, she looked to the two again. "If you want an even better example, you should hear about when he faced Red."

"Why? Who's Red?" Cynder asked, raising an eyebrow.

Ember giggled before sighing. "Red was a rogue Elder who tried to take over the realms with his dark gems, stones that warped the very existence of reality around them," she began, closing her eyes as she began to recall the tale. "He caused a lot of problems during that adventure and, unlike Bianca, my Spyro even had to directly confront him to get him to stop. Though he left the realms for a time after Spyro beat him, he soon returned when the Sorcerer attacked."

"During that time, Red acted as the Sorcerer's right-hand man. He acted very much like he did during the previous attack... However, it was only then that Spyro discovered a certain fact about Red," Ember said, sighing as she looked down. "As it turned out, he wasn't committing any of those acts of his own will. He used to be a good dragon, a lot like my Spyro, before the Sorcerer managed to brainwash him into a power-mad dragon bent on taking over the realms."

Both Legend and Cynder flinched a bit, looking at each other before looking back to Ember. The pink dragoness sighed before she continued.

"Thankfully, when Spyro fought him that time, he managed to break the control the Sorcerer had over him. Though we don't really get to see him much since it isn't until very late in the loop, from what I've seen, Red is remorseful for his actions even though Spyro was more than willing to accept him despite all he has done," Ember said, closing her eyes as she raised her head. "It's a good thing he was so accepting, too. I can't imagine what it must feel like to be forced to carry out things against your will."

"Yeah..."

Legend looked over to Cynder, the dragoness holding her head low as her eyes drooped. Legend leant his head over to her, nuzzling her gently. Ember opened her eyes in time to see this display, her face remaining expressionless. When she noticed the two starting to look her way again, Ember quickly reclosed her eyes.

"Anyways, what I'm trying to say is Spyro doesn't care what you've done, even if you fought him directly. If you feel bad about what you've done, or are willing to change, he'll accept you no matter what."

Silence hung over the group as Ember finished, Legend taking in what she had said. Not long after, a knock was heard and the front door creaked open.

"Spyro! Your father is here!" Edna called.

With that, Ember and Cynder helped Legend to his paws and walked him to the door. As they rounded the corner, Cynder turned her mate's head toward hers and whispered into his ear, "May the ancestors be with you in this crazy place."

"May they be with us all," Legend whispered back before he turned towards the door.

Legend then steeled himself for the craziest sight he had ever encountered in his loops thus far. His dragonfly father stood at the door, taking the form of a portly blue dragon. The bag he carried dropped and his maw hung open in shock at the pitiful sight before him. "What the heck happened to you?!"

Legend sighed. From this point on, anything that resembled logic would no longer apply.

"Por tejedor, pulse dos. Para asistensia, habla 'representante.' Press one to continue in Artisan."

Nina depressed the second key on the phone, rather surprised that the local hospital decided to prioritize Dream Weaver tongue over Artisan.

"Por tejedor, pulse dos. Para asistensia—"

This time, Nina tried the first key. Was this thing broken?

"Por tejedor, pulse do—"

With great frustration, she tried to reach the hospital one last time.

"Representante!"

"Por teje—"

"Ah, hijo de puta!"

The telephone was slammed back into its dock and Nina sulked against the wall. She would have to walk her kids all the way to the hospital, at this hour?

Glancing towards her son, who almost looked like a woolly sheep with the cotton that enveloped his torso, she decided that, for now, the doctor could wait. Suddenly, a knock sounded from the door. Nina rose again and walked towards the door with a heavy heart. She knew what was coming, and when she opened the door, her fears were realized.

"Oh god..."

Burn marks scarred her other son, who was carried in the arms of her husband. One disaster was enough, but two? It just wasn't fair...

"Come in, Flash. Be careful with him."

"But I've been careful the entire time I carried him."

"Flash. Not now."

With that firm declination, Nina walked back to the living room and watched as her husband carefully lay Legend on the sofa across from Classic. The first thing that the parboiled dragon noticed about his counterpart was the ridiculous get-up.

Classic caught this derisive stare and responded from the corner of his mouth. "Don't ask."

Both dragons then looked towards their mother. Dried tears marred her face, and their father crossed his arms while staring at his pair of sons, anxious to find out what happened. Flash took the lead this time and sounded his curiosity. "Alright, son. Spill. Tell exactly what happened to your mother."

Both Spyros opened their mouths to answer before Classic was corrected.

"I'm talking to the one who doesn't look like a sheep."

The Classic-branch anchor looked away, insulted. "Well, you don't have to be mean about it."

"Well, it was like Ember's mother said on the phone," Legend said, turning his head towards his parents. "We were at the park before the chaos started, and tried to get away once it did. A pillar had sprung up, and was about to collapse on us. I managed to push Cynder and Ember out of the way, but I didn't escape in time. I was nearly boiled by lava, but Cynder managed to get me out in time," he explained, motioning to his burns.

Nina narrowed her eyes, crossing her arms as she looked at the twins. "And why exactly weren't you with your brother?"

"Um...well..." Legend said, averting his eyes. He tried to come up with a rational explanation for why, but every time he dared a glance towards his mother, he found it hard to fabricate something. He always had a hard time lying to his parents, even if they were in a different form.

"We got into an argument," Classic jumped in, managing to free his mouth from the gauze he was wrapped in like a mummy.

Legend's head turned quickly to face his counterpart, though he winced from pain at said action. Classic glanced at his counterpart, his expression unchanging as he looked back at his parents.

"Well, you see... You know how earlier today Hunter was looking for us?" Classic asked, putting on the most apologetic expression he could.

"Yeah...?" Nina asked, her voice taking a more serious tone as she raised an eyebrow.

"Well...he was really looking for me specifically," Classic said, looking down sorrowfully. "We...we planned to pull some pranks today, involving a mash potato cannon."

"A what now?" Flash asked, scratching his head.

"A mash potato cannon. It's a cannon that fires mash potatoes," Classic said, looking up. "We made it a few weeks ago. We weren't going to hurt anyone with it, honest!"

Despite Classic's insistence, Nina was absolutely livid. She growled, throwing up her arms. "I knew that Hunter was a bad influence on you! I honestly have no idea why I let you hang out with him!"

"The mash potato cannon was my idea, though. Hunter really is a good cheetah, honest!"

Flash shook his head, giving Classic a stern look. "We'll discuss this 'potato cannon' thing later. For now, let's get back to why you and your brother split up."

"Oh, right. Well, obviously, I didn't tell my twin about this," Classic said, looking away. "...Honestly, I was planning on ditching him from the start."

" *Spyro* !"

Both Spyros flinched before Nina shook her head.

"No, I mean the Spyro who is currently in *more* trouble," Nina said before she shot a cold glare at Flash.

Flash cleared his throat as he looked away, scratching the back of his head.

"I'm sorry... Anyways, my twin ended up finding out about it and obviously he wasn't exactly happy about the idea," Classic said, looking over to Legend. "We started arguing, I called him a stick in the mud, and he called me a child. Eventually, he tried to take the cannon from me and I tried to grab it back, and we ended up breaking it. I ended up getting so mad that I ran off, and eventually made my way to the skatepark to calm down and...well," Classic said, looking down at himself. "...I think you already know what happened."

"And where was Hunter in all this?" Nina demanded, crossing her arms.

"He tried to chase after me, but despite being a cheetah, I'm still a lot quicker than he is."

To this, Nina couldn't really disagree. She still remembered trying to corral Classic as a youngling, a thought that made her shudder.

"And why didn't you try to chase after him?" Flash asked, turning his attention towards Legend.

"I...I tried to," Legend said, lowering his head. "But he was far too quick for me to keep up with. He kept weaving in and out of alleyways and, well...I ended up getting lost."

"See! You see! I *told* you they should keep a map of the city on them at all times!"

"Nina..."

Admittedly, Legend found it hard not to chuckle, but it quickly subsided when his parents glanced at him again. Lowering his head, he began to continue his story. "Anyways, I managed to find my way to the park, where I met up with Cynder and Ember, and then all that chaos started and..."

Nina looked at both her boys, the pitiful looks on their faces causing her expression to soften slightly. She sighed, placing her paw on her head. "...I really wish you boys would get along. Ever since you were young, you two have been at each other's throats."

"Well, since it sounds like this was mostly Spyro's...well, the Spyro-wrapped-in-gauze's fault," Flash said, rolling his eyes when Nina gave him a glare. "I feel like an apology is in order. Spyro, apologize to your brother."

Classic paused, glancing over to Legend. Legend looked at him with an expressionless face. Classic's eyes glanced down, his face drooping. He managed to glance up for a few seconds, but his expression was unchanging.

"I'm...I'm sorry. For everything," he said before he looked down again.

Legend didn't say anything at first, though a small smile slowly made its way onto his face. Finally, despite how much it pained him to do so, he lifted his paw and patted Classic on the back. "Apology accepted."

Classic glanced back up, managing to smile despite the first-aid cocoon he was wrapped in. Nina and Flash's expressions softened, but nonetheless Flash cleared his throat.

"Now then, sheep Spyro," Flash said, trying to suppress a laugh as he glanced down at the Spyro wrapped in gauze. "Go to your room. You're grounded until further notice."

The smile on Classic's face quickly disappeared after that, but nonetheless, after everything he'd done today, he felt like he had no right to disagree. With a sad sigh, he attempted to get up...only to roll off the couch and onto the floor, the gauze softening the impact. Classic attempted to right himself, paws flailing to no avail.

'I feel like I'm trapped in the boulder again...' he thought, his expression flattening.

Flash shot Nina a flat glance. Nina looked away, biting her lip slightly. "Okay, so maybe I overreacted just a *tiny* bit..."

Legend tried his best to suppress a chuckle. He considered rolling his twin to their room, but he was interrupted by a question from his mother.

"Spyro, did you have something to eat while you were out?" Nina asked, eyeing neither Spyro in particular.

As if on cue, Legend's stomach rumbled. While Legend didn't fully understand the diet among dragons in this loop, food was food. So, he shook his head and his mother's eyebrow raised.

"You two must be starving! Flash, help the kids to the kitchen, will you?"

Flash nodded his head, going to pick both Spyros up. Immediately, Classic was quick to speak up in an attempt to avoid any further embarrassment. "No, wait!"

Both Spyros turned their heads to each other, and Classic took control of the conversation. "We can get there ourselves, right, bro?"

Legend took the hint and tried his best not to give out as he proceeded to push his brother to the kitchen, Classic's arms crossed and an embarrassed blush visible on his face. *'So much for avoiding embarrassment...'*

Nina walked ahead, looking back to make sure her son wasn't pushing himself too hard. With a smile, she spoke. "First, sandwiches. Then to bed, both of you. You need your rest."

Two pieces of bread, with some slivers of meat and a slice of cheese in between. Although he was glad that this meal did not involve the use of silverware, Legend didn't understand the purpose of the bread. But that didn't stop him from inhaling four sandwiches. Classic, on the other hand, ate slowly, struggling to raise the food to his mouth from inside his prison of gauze. Both dragons finished eating and their parents carried them off to their room. After some 'goodnight's and 'I love you's, the Spyros laid in their beds and the door closed.

Drowsiness settled in, and Classic was relieved that he could finally get some sleep, but fate would have none of this.

"Spyro?"

The fleeced dragon's eyes creaked open at this interruption. He sighed, but nonetheless answered his brother.

"What?" he asked, attempting to look at his counterpart, only to fail miserably due to his gauze prison.

Legend paused before he raised his head to look at Classic, a frown on his face. "Do you hate me? For letting you take the blame and the punishment?"

"...I'm not happy about it, but I deserve it. Considering all this was my fault, you were more or less the victim here, regardless," Classic said, glancing at Legend from the corner of his eye. "I don't hate you."

Legend looked on with a blank expression before he finally snapped back to reality. "But, what about—?"

"No, not even during the fight. I just thought that, if I could prove to you that I'm at your level, you wouldn't think of me as a brat anymore," Classic said, looking up at the ceiling as he frowned slightly. "...Though, I have to admit that I also wanted to make you eat your words for calling me a child."

"...I'm sorry for saying that," Legend said, glancing downward.

"Hey, like I said, we're both kids. It's just that you seem to hate that idea. I guess that's what got me mad," Classic said, shrugging as much as he could in his first-aid prison.

Legend turned around, laying his head on his pillow as he curled up into a ball. Several seconds passed before he let out a sigh. "If you've been through what I've been through, you'd understand."

A yawn groaned out from Legend's counterpart. Classic's eyes drooped, but he was determined to continue the conversation.

"Yeah, about that... Exactly how bad is your loop?" he asked, glancing at Legend again out of the corner of his eye. "I mean, I know you said it was in the middle of a massive war and you were dragged into it at around the same age I was when I started my adventures, but considering...well..." Classic averted his eyes, wishing he could just shake off the memory of what he had caused Legend to transform into.

Legend was silent for a few seconds, unmoving as he began to speak.

"Imagine a world where you're a special kind of dragon. A dragon born once every ten generations. A dragon whose major innate ability is to guide the fate of the era you're born into." Legend paused, letting that sink in. "Now, imagine the previous purple dragon before you went mad with power, became convinced his destiny was to end the world, and got locked into a millennia-long war with his own kind."

Classic silently listened to Legend's story. Legend raised his head, glancing at his counterpart out of the corner of his eye.

"Now, imagine being born into said world, where everyone knows that, because you have the same abilities as that dragon, you're the only one that has even a remote chance of beating him, despite the fact that he has way more experience with these powers than you do," Legend said before he rested his head back on the pillow. "...And *that* is only the tip of the iceberg."

"Imagine having to find out about these powers and origin when you originally believed you were no different than a dragonfly. Imagine having to fight your way through hordes of hardened soldiers to save the only dragons who can teach you how to use these powers. Imagine having to fight the other purple dragon's general, a dragon who terrified you to your very core, only to later find out that..."

Legend paused, managing to catch himself before he let that specific detail spill. He glanced back to Classic, who was eyeing him curiously. Legend shook his head.

"Never mind, it's not important," he said before he rolled onto his back and began to look at the ceiling. "What I'm trying to get at is, you can say that you come from a world with a very bad baseline...but you don't know just how taxing, how *stressful* it is to be that one dragon who has to try to put it all back together again, to *make* it good...until you've experienced every single detail yourself."

Legend sighed, closing his eyes. "Now, imagine having to do all this...to relive all of this...again...and again...and *again...* "

Classic said nothing as an awkward silence fell over the room. He closed his eyes. *'I think I'm beginning to understand why he's so uptight...'*

"Well," Classic said, glancing back over to Legend, "at the very least, all the skills you've built up should make it all easier, right?"

"In some ways, yes. The only being in my loop that can still give me a challenge is Malefor, the other purple dragon I mentioned. Considering that, despite all my loops, he's probably *still* way older than me because of living for a millennia before I came along, it's not surprising." Legend let out a long sigh. "However, there are some things...some things even gaining raw amounts of power can't fix..."

Classic raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

Silence fell over the room as Classic waited for a response. Legend stirred in his bed before he sighed.

"There's...there's someone I'm trying to save in my loop, someone who, if I don't manage to pull it off, ends up having a horrible baseline for the rest of the loop," Legend said, making sure not to go into any specific details. "I know where they are during all this, but...the problem is, I barely have a few minutes after the loop starts

to save them, and even with Dragon Time...I always end up getting there when it's too late."

A silence hung over the room again as Classic listened to Legend's plight. Classic looked up towards the ceiling, unmoving in his cocoon as he thought about Legend's problem. "You know," he said, looking back towards Legend, "I can teach you to teleport, if you want."

"Huh?" Legend said, raising his head to look at Classic.

"Yeah," Classic said, his voice taking a more cheery tone. "If slowing down time isn't helping you, then teleportation might. I know my teleportation is almost instantaneous, so it might help you get to where you need to go at the start of your loop in time."

Legend paused before he laid back down on his pillow. "I'm...I'm not sure. I've never really tried using magic before. What makes you think I can pull it off?"

"Well, mostly because magic is pretty easy once you know the basics," Classic said with a smile. "And because, if the purple dragons of your world are more or less like the ones from mine, you should at least have *some* magical talent."

Legend paused, silently taking in Classic's words. He smiled. "...Thanks. I really appreciate it."

"Again, the least I can do after how much of a jerk I've been," Classic said, closing his eyes as he grinned.

Silence washed over the room again as the two weary dragons rested their heads on their pillows. Several seconds passed before Classic glanced over towards Legend.

"You know," Classic began, "I've had to fight another purple dragon in my loop too."

Legend raised his head, glancing over to Classic.

"...Granted, the situation he caused wasn't as bad as a millennia-long war, but he *did* try to suck the Dragon Realms into an alternate dark dimension," Classic said, glancing towards the ceiling.

"Why did he do that?"

Classic paused before he glanced back at Legend. "Not really sure, to be honest. It was some sort of gibberish about him being the only 'true dragon.' If you ask me, I just think he was nuts."

Legend paused. From the sound of things, the purple dragon Classic faced sounded like it might be his world's counterpart to Malefor, give or take a few generations.

"I suppose it was more than likely I'd end up facing a purple dragon at some point, though, considering they aren't as rare in my world as they sound in yours," Classic said, looking back at the ceiling. "Don't get me wrong, they're still really rare in comparison to other scale colorations, but it's not a 'once in every ten generations' thing like you said it was in your world."

Legend raised an eyebrow. "That...that sounds rather dangerous, to be honest. How could there be so many dragons that possess these kinds of powers running around, and yet your world manages to remain peaceful despite it?"

"My guess is it mostly comes down to natural talent with that," Classic said, glancing back to Legend. "Besides, high magical affinity and reserves are actually the only real abilities purple dragons of my world possess," Classic admitted with a sigh. "The only reason I'm able to use so many elements is because they were induced by fairy magic..."

Legend paused. "Odd. Purple dragons in my world can use many different elements as innate ability."

There was yet another silence as Classic yawned, trying his best to fight off the sleep his body was desperately craving. He glanced over

to Legends, expression indifferent. "Hey..."

Legend raised his head, glancing back at Classic.

"Listen. I understand how bad of a world you come from now, and I'm sorry for making light of it earlier..." Classic said as he looked at Legend with wide eyes. "But if your loops sucked that badly, and you were presented the opportunity to have some fun for once, why aren't you taking it?"

At this, Legend found himself unable to answer. This thought had never really crossed his mind during the whole ordeal. Sure, Classic had mentioned this to him before, though tempers were flaring at the time. He hadn't really thought about what he'd said until now. Logically, Classic's point was undeniable, but logic doesn't really play much of a part in emotions.

Legend stared up at the ceiling, trying to form a solid rebuttal, until he heard soft snoring from the bed across from him. Glancing over, he saw his counterpart had finally lost the battle against his sleep-deprived body.

'Well, I guess this conversation is over. To be honest, I wish I could *enjoy this place. It's just that the thought that there's another me running around, who might as well be my complete opposite...it's just unsettling.'*

Feeling the lull of sleep becoming heavier and heavier, Legend pulled up the covers and finally put an end to this long day.

(A/N: And there we have it. The Spyros are no longer attempting to kill each other... though, things are now rather awkward between them.

And so completes the first quarter of this arc. This isn't the end of it by far. There are still two more quarters to go. Second quarter is likely the characters trying to get use to each other,

and as for the third quarter... well, that's going to be a secret at the moment. If you *really* want to spoil yourselves, the link to the thread we're using to work on this is on my profile like always.

Anyways, not much else to say about this chapter. Will the Spyros be able to get use to each other in the up coming chapters? How will the Legend characters adjust to their new surroundings? And will Legend finally be able to lighten up a little? Find out next time!)

New world, new experiences (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

(Fused loop 1.1 continued) (Feat: TokoWH, UkeleleNarhwal, and AbZHz101)

Legend's flew through the swamp that was his home. He pushed his body to it's limit. He had to find Cynder before his premonition came true. He blasted through the familiar trees the wind from his wings caressing the trees as he sped past. Finally he saw the Dragon Temple appear in front of him. Instinct guided him down into the hatchery, there was no time to lose. Once he entered the hatchery, he noticed that it was filled! Before he truly had time to contemplate this, the doors slammed shut, and the light from overhead dimmed, leaving Legends in pure black. Sending out a puff of flame to have enough light to locate his targets, Legends took aim and ignited the torches by one of the doorframes. Treading lightly around the room, Legends proceeded to do the same to the other torches, until the entire room was lit. Turning around the entire room to search for potential attackers he found none. He seemed to be alone in the room for now, what was going on?

However once he turned his back to the pedestal where the purple egg... his egg... was he heard a spine-tingling chuckle. Twisting, he found his own egg gone, and a familiar form twisted by dark energies stepping out from the shadows. Legends crouched, preparing to move, expecting a fight. "My, my, aren't we anxious?" his dark scaled counterpart queried. Legend's said nothing, scanning the area around the dark dragon for traps as much as he could without taking his eyes off his enemy. "Well at least you're not fooling yourself as to your expectations," his darkness said with a shrug. "Good, because *we've* been waiting for this for *so long* for you to show up. Why she just couldn't hold out. But she came to my way of thinking eventually."

Legend's eyes widened in shock and denial. *'No! He couldn't mean-'* At that moment an adult black dragoness stepped out into the light, Cynder, the Terror of the Skies. *"YOU-"* Legends cryed as he rushed the dark dragon, *he'd end this in one blow!* Neither black dragon made a move to block him. However just before his attack landed, his Darkness became Classic, a look of terror drawn on his face. Eyes barely staying in their sockets, Legends brought his attack to a halt inches before it would have hit Classic.

Then the look on Classic's face morphed into a sadistic grin, and he returned to being his inner Darkness. Open, Legends could only try to mitigate the damage done by Dark Spyro's counterstrike. Rolling from where he had been knocked back to, Legends gaped at his Dark form in unguarded horror. Dark Spyro howled in laughter, "Oh gods, you're still so damn gullible! You really think hesitating *now* will help you? For all you're expertize at fighting you walk into every single trap fat and happy!" Dark Spyro stopped laughing. "Now let's have some fun shall we?" With that he launched a lightning bolt at Legends.

Expecting an attack, Legends jerked to the side out of the way, only to watch as the bolt continued on it's path and struck one of the eggs lining the walls, shattering it. the implication was obvious, dodge and the eggs would pay the price. "Coward!" Legends roared.

"Pragmatic," Dark Spyro retorted at a much lower volume. "Besides, Cynder and I will be lauded as heroes who valiantly overcame the evil purple who came into the sanctuary to destroy all the eggs," then with a shake of his head containing on obviously false sorrow he said, "Such a shame that we arrived too late to stop him."

"What are you-" Legends began to ask before looking down at his form. What he saw made his blood run cold. He was somehow in Malefor's body!

"NOW THEN" an echoing call hit Legends from every side. Looking around he saw that he was now flying in the caldera of an active

volcano. "TRY TO KEEP ME ENTERTAINED BEFORE YOU DIE, WOULD YOU?"

Classic groaned, reluctantly opening his eyes. In short, it was easier to list everything on him that *didn't* ache. If nothing else, sleep was an empty, relaxing void. He yawned.

"Mornin'," he said without really thinking.

He paused when he got no response. Raising an eyebrow, he glanced over to Legend out of the corner of his eye. He saw the dragon in question curled up in his bed, shaking badly as he held the blanket up over his head. Classic blinked.

'Odd... Didn't take him for someone who has nightmares,' Classic thought, shaking his head. "Yo! Time to wake up!"

Legend refused to respond, still hiding under his blanket as he continued to shake. Classic narrowed his eyes. "Come on, wake up!"

Classic frowned as Legend stubbornly refused to respond. He sighed. *'Looks like I'm going to have to go over there and wake him up by force.'*

Classic tossed his blanket off with his somewhat free paws. He went to jump out of his bed, but all he accomplished was making the bed rock slightly. He tried again, but once again he was met with nothing more than the bed rocking. He scowled, beginning to flail about in attempt to free himself from his prison, but to no avail.

He sighed, his face going flat as a puff of smoke escaped his nostrils. *'If I can even* get out *of this bed first.'*

Classic began rolling side to side in hopes that it would free him. Continuing to rock back and forth, he was finally met with success as he rolled onto the floor, a squeaking sound being released from the gauze cushion that encased him. There was a slight, slow 'ow' from

Classic as he picked himself up. Looking over to Legend, he narrowed his eyes. Walking over, having to scuttle his paws across the floor due to how wrapped up he was, he soon found himself at Legend's bed.

"Hey! Wake up!" Classic said, raising up and beginning to shake his shoulder. "I said wake u— *AAAH!* "

With a shout of terror, Legend jumped up in his bed. Classic went tumbling back from the sudden action, his cocoon of gauze letting out squeaks as he bounced along the floor. He let out another moan of pain before he looked up at Legend. Legend was panting as he sat in his bed, staring down blankly. Classic raised an eyebrow.

"Man," he said, rolling to his side and back to his feet. "Not even considering what happened yesterday, you look awful."

Legend glanced over, his bloodshot eyes hidden slightly behind his drooping eyelids. He closed his eyes, shaking his head. Classic scuttled back over to him.

"You get *any* sleep last night?" Classic asked, raising an eyebrow.

Legend took a few seconds before he responded, taking a few deep breaths. "Not...not really."

Classic watched as Legend put a paw on his forehead. Eyes wide with concern, he put his forepaws on his bed.

"You can go back to bed if you want," Classic said, looking away. "I can figure out how to get a healing spell myself if you're that tired."

" No !" Legend blurted out, turning his head quickly as he looked at his counterpart, nearly causing Classic to stumble over again. Realizing his sudden outburst, Legend cleared his throat as his expression softened. "I-I mean, I want to help. The only reason we need those spells is because of me. If I didn't... *mess up* during our

fight, then we could go to whatever this 'hospital' is and our parents would believe everything we said."

Classic gave his counterpart an odd look, noting the obviously fake smile on his face. Nonetheless, he shook it off.

"...Alright. But I still don't know what we can do at this point. I'm stuck at home, and you're definitely not well enough to go anywhere anytime soon," Classic said before looking back towards the door. "On top of that, our parents will figure something is up if they catch us sneaking a medical spellbook into the house."

Legend paused, looking down at his blanket. Several seconds passed before his eyes widened and he looked at Classic. "What about that...talking...thing?"

"...I'm sorry?"

Legend's expression flattened as he put his paw to his head. "You know, that...thing you used to talk to me at Cynder's yesterday."

"You mean a phone?"

"Yeah. We can talk to Cynder and ask her to help us out."

Classic paused, attempting to put his paw on his chin, but thanks to his bandages it looked more like he was pointing at his chest. "Well, I messed up the phone last night, but I can use my command line to get around that easily. What about Hunter, though?"

Legend paused, looking away. "I...well, don't take this the wrong way, but—"

"You don't trust him?" Classic asked, raising an eyebrow. "That's understandable, I guess. I just thought that there would be lower risk if someone who's used to cities brought the book to us, but now that I think about it, Hunter has a horrible sense of direction. Maybe it's best that your friend take care of this."

"So, when are we—?"

Before Legend could finish, his mother called her kids down to the kitchen. "Spyros, breakfast!"

Classic and Legend looked toward the door and Legend sighed in fatigue, preparing to push his brother to the table once more. However, Classic held up his paw at the gesture.

"I am an independent dragon, thank you very much," Classic said as he began to scuttle towards the door. He paused when he noticed the door knob. He attempted to stand to place his paw on it, but as soon as he got on his hind legs, he fell over onto his back.

The fleeced dragon frowned before he attempted to roll himself to the bedroom door. Though he managed that with paws facing the door knob, to his distress he found that no matter how much he flailed his paws, the doorknob was *just* out of reach. Classic glanced over to his counterpart, said dragon trying his best not to smirk at the scene. Classic's expression flattened before he finally sighed in defeat.

"A little help? ... *Please* ?"

The entire family sat at the kitchen table, dining on pieces of toast with assorted spreads. As Legend and Classic silently ate, Nina glanced down at her troubled and exhausted child.

"Spyro?"

Both heads raised in acknowledgement.

"The one on my left, please."

Classic resumed his breakfast, while Legend twiddled his claws, having a hard time looking at his mother.

"Yes, mother?" Legend asked, his voice a bit shaky.

"I was doing my nightly neighbourhood patrol on the dreamscape, and I saw your nightmare."

At this, Legend could barely prevent the food from catapulting out of his mouth. *'W-what!? How could she see my dreams?!'*

Seeing how unnerved his counterpart was, Classic's mind began to race. *'Oh crap! Why did our loop mother have to be a Dream Weaver!? Crap, crap,* crap *! If my counterpart dreamed about the fight, we're in deep trouble!'*

"Even though I could have ended the nightmare myself, I believe that dreams help our minds process the events of our day and even nightmares have their place," Nina said before she glanced upward. "What I'm surprised about is the content of your nightmare. I didn't recognize anything from it, except for your brother. Is there something you're not telling me?"

It took everything Classic had to keep a calm straight face, despite how inside he was letting loose a stream of profanities that would cause a drunken sailor to turn beet red. Luckily, before Nina could continue her inquiry, Flash dropped his bread and the chair squeaked as it got pushed back a bit.

"Nina, don't do that!"

"Do what?" Nina asked, her expression seemingly innocent.

Flash held his claws to his temples as he sighed. "Just because you can talk about other people's dreams doesn't mean you should."

"This is our kids that I'm talking about. If they're having bad dreams, it's my responsibility to put an end to it," Nina retorted, crossing her arms.

"Nina. Our sons are twelve years old. They're coming to the point where they need to learn how to deal with their own problems, so the training wheels have to come off," Flash said, narrowing his eyes.

"And what exactly do you mean by that?!" Nina said, narrowing hers.

As the argument began, Classic signalled Legend to the living room, where they could assess the situation in relative privacy. Thankfully, in their heated discussion, their parents didn't notice them slip away. Once he felt like he was out of earshot, Classic began to vehemently whisper to his twin.

"What the hell did you dream about?" he asked, narrowing his eyes.

"Why should I—?"

"Before you finish that question," Classic interrupted, motioning for him to look towards Nina, "let me explain to you something. From what I can tell, Mom is a Dream Weaver. They're dragons that have innate abilities to see and manipulate dreams. The best Weavers can make them come to life. Because she's a Dream Weaver, she'll be able to see everything you dream about, and then there will be questions. At the very *least* there will be questions, if your dream was revealing enough," Classic explained before he glared back at Legend. "So in other words, *did you or did you not* dream about the fight yesterday?"

Legend paused, looking away sheepishly as he scratched the back of his neck. "Ki...kind of..."

Classic let out a groan. Legend quickly turned to face him.

"Now, hold on. It wasn't the full fight! It was just, well..." Legend said before he sighed and lowered his head. "I was...I was at my world's Dragon Temple at first, and I was confronted by my dark form. He began taunting me and I tried to fight him. When I tried to attack him, he...well, he kind of morphed into you."

At this, Classic raised an eyebrow.

"And it wasn't until late in the dream I realized that I was fighting in Malefor's—the other purple dragon I told you about—body..." Legend finished, looking back up to Classic.

Classic listened to his story, trying to cross his arms as much as his gauze cocoon would let him. "Anything else?"

Legend glanced away, biting his lip. "... No, there was nothing else."

Classic narrowed his eyes. He could tell Legend was hiding more than he let on, but nonetheless he got a feeling there was no way he could drag it out of him. Sighing, he looked at Legend. "Well, there's good news and then there's bad news. What would you like to hear first?"

"Bad news, please," Legend said, turning his head to face Classic.

Classic narrowed his eyes as he relayed his predictions to Legend. "Mom is going to be watching very closely now, and if you keep dreaming about that, she won't have a doubt that we're keeping stuff from her. The good news is that today's dream didn't reveal much, and Mom didn't recognize much, so we can just chalk it up to a scary movie."

At the word 'movie', Legend blinked blankly. Classic shook his head.

"Never mind, that's not what's important at the moment," Classic said before a mischievous smirk appeared on his face. "What is important is that I'm going to help you relax."

"Wha—?"

Classic shook his head before he began to explain. "You're having nightmares because of all the stress you've been through during the loops. You're going to relax, because if you don't, we're both screwed. Got it?"

Despite his apprehension, Legend knew Classic was right. Reluctantly, he nodded. Classic was about to say something, but he noticed that Flash and Nina's argument was beginning to wind down. Quickly, the two quietly resumed their seats at the table without being noticed.

"Honestly, I'm just trying to look out for them," Nina said, her eyes wide as she frowned softly.

Flash closed his eyes as he placed his paw on his forehead. "And, honey, I know how hard it is to see Spyro go through all that, but dreams are dreams. He has to resolve the problem himself so that the next time he has a dream like that, he won't have to depend on you."

Nina frowned before she sighed. Turning her head, she aimed her eyes at Legend. "If this happens again, I will be entering your dream. And then you will explain to me, in detail, every part of that dream. Understand?"

Flash sighed, realizing there was no real reasoning with his wife when it came to protecting their young. Legend nodded vigorously. If he didn't think that his mother made an intimidating dragon before, he sure did now.

"Good. Now finish your breakfast and take a shower, you both smell horrible."

Both Spyros looked down at each other. Curiously, Classic sniffed his gauze cocoon, only to instantly regret that decision as he recoiled in disgust.

Classic sighed, stretching his sore forelegs, thankful to finally be rid of the gauze prison. He still needed bandaging after his shower, but thankfully with Flash to oversee it, the gauze was much more reasonably applied this time around. Legend opted to take a bath,

having a feeling that water droplets hitting his burn wounds wouldn't exactly feel all that good.

Legend sighed. Dragons weren't normally supposed to use towels to dry off, but Nina had insisted. No longer dripping wet, he walked towards the living room where he saw Nina bidding farewell to Flash. He was a bit confused by the fact that they were standing on their hind legs at the time, but after everything that had happened, it definitely wasn't the weirdest thing in this loop by far.

With a slightly amused expression, he began to head up the stairs. As he did, he noticed that Classic had quickly followed behind him. As soon as they were out of earshot of their mother, Classic darted in front of Legend.

"Alright then," Classic said, a smirk on his face. "Time to begin operation 'calm my counterpart down.'"

Legend frowned. Somehow, he had a bad feeling about this.

"So, is there *anything* you like to do that isn't related to fighting in a war?" Classic asked, sitting down and crossing his forelegs.

Legend blinked, looking at the odd stance his loop brother was taking. He cringed. "Uh, can you not...do that?"

"Do what?" asked Classic, tilting his head as he raised an eyebrow.

"That...foreleg crossing...thing," Legend said, having to glance away after a while.

Classic blinked. "Why? What's wrong with this?"

"It's just, dragons of my world aren't supposed to *bend* that way. So, it's a bit..." Legend said, taking another glance as he cringed at the sight, "...unsettling."

Classic's expression flattened as he put both his front paws back on the ground, Legend breathing a sigh of relief as he did. Classic

shook his head before he narrowed his eyes at his loop brother.

"Oh, right. Your question," Legend said as he glanced upward in thought. "...Um..."

Legend paused, closing his eyes. *'You know, now that I really think about it...I'm not really sure, to be honest. The last time I remember just playing around and not doing anything related to the war was back in the swamp before I found out I was a dragon, and that was such a long time ago...'* Legend's head drooped as he let out a sigh. *'I didn't realize it until now, but...as much as I hate to admit it, the war is pretty much all I know...'*

Classic sat with a raised eyebrow, watching his loop brother sit silently. He narrowed his eyes, bringing his paw up and snapping his claws.

"Hey, don't go to sleep on me," Classic said before placing his paw on the ground again. "I know you're tired after last night, but we can't risk you falling asleep and having another nightmare."

Legends jumped at the snapping sound before he eyed his brother curiously. "How'd you do that?"

"What? This?" Classic asked, raising his paw as he snapped his claws again. Seeing Legend recoil a bit in disgust, Classic's face went flat. "Let me guess, dragons of your world don't have double-jointed claws, either?"

"Eh, no..." Legend said flatly, glancing away.

Classic sighed, placing a paw on his head. "Well, that explains why you fumble so much with silverware... Listen, I know this may all seem uncanny to you, but you're going to have to get used to it, since a lot of the stuff from my world is designed around dragons being able to do things that apparently dragons from your world normally can't."

"I've got that, it's just..." Legend said, shaking his head as he looked back at Classic. "Listen, I think we should just focus on getting that healing spell thing you were talking about earlier. We can't really do much of anything while we're still dealing with the effects of what happened yesterday."

Classic's expression flattened. He knew Legend was mostly trying to dodge the subject, but at the same time, he knew what he spoke of was also true.

"Fine. But once that's out of the way, I'm going to teach you how to lighten up a little. No exceptions."

Legend watched as his loop brother headed off towards their room. As soon as he entered through the door, Legend raised his paw and looked at it. Curiously, he began to move one of his claws around. The instant he managed to make it move towards more of an opposable-thumb-like position, he quickly shook his paw and recoiled back. Resolving to *never* do that again, he followed his loop brother to their room.

Cynder stared blankly at the odd collection of food on her plate. When she'd heard there was going to be eggs, she hadn't expected them to be whipped into an odd mixture of yellow fluff. There were at least some strips of meat on the side, though there was also more bread. Considering what she had seen so far, bread was mostly used for treats, so having it in what was supposed to be a more substantial meal seemed rather odd. Regardless, seeing Ember starting to turn her collect of food into a sandwich—using the silverware that was, oddly enough, provided for them, for whatever reason—she began to follow suit.

"Cynder, you have a call from Spyro!" Edna said, walking over and handing Cynder the phone. "Also, sweetie, *please* at least *try* to use the silverware? I know you had that traumatic incident with a spoon when you were a youngling, but we're not animals."

Cynder blinked as she took the odd plastic device in her paws, unsure of what her loop mother had meant—though, at the mention of the word 'spoon', she *did* feel a powerful urge to shudder. Looking back down, she noticed the device was the same one Spyro had used yesterday to talk to his counterpart. A 'phone', if she remembered correctly. Though a bit unsure of why one of the Spyros would use such an odd device instead of coming to talk to her in person, she nonetheless—rather awkwardly—held the phone up to her ear.

"U-uh...hello?"

It was at this point Ember gently took the phone from her, turned it the *right* side up, and gave it back to her, all while trying to suppress a giggle. Blinking in embarrassment, Cynder once again awkwardly held it up to her ear.

"H-hello...?"

"Hello? Cynder, right?"

From the way that line was delivered alone, Cynder could quickly deduce she wasn't talking to her Spyro. She glanced over to the phone in confusion. *'Why would the other Spyro want to talk to me?'*

"Yeah...?" Cynder asked, awkwardly glancing around the room. *'Talking to someone without being able to see them is just too weird...'*

"I need you to do us a favor," Classic said, his voice turning to a whisper. "I need you to go to the library and pick up a book about healing magic."

"Why?" she asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Because, our mother wants to take us to the hospital," Classic said, taking a few seconds' pause before he started talking again. "And if she does, the doctor will tell her our injuries are a lot more severe

than what they should be compared to our stories, and when she realizes that, our stories will start falling apart, and when *that* happens, what happened at the park will be dragged out into the open not long after."

"Okay," Cynder said, glancing over to the phone. "I think I get it. You want the book on h—"

" *Shh! Not so loud!* " Classic whispered forcefully over the phone. "I don't want either of our parents knowing about this. If they find out about the book, they'll know something's up!"

"Oh, sorry..." Cynder said, lowering her voice. "Anyways, you want it to make your wounds less severe and thus make *you know what* more believable?"

"Something like that. I'd prefer if I could undo it all so we can actually *do* something this loop, but regardless, so long as we can avoid ending up in *you know where* in our current state, we'll be good."

Cynder paused, checking to make sure that no one else besides Ember was beside her. Once she was sure no one was eavesdropping, she continued. "Why can't you just go to the library to read up on *that* there? Seems like it'd be less risky."

"Believe me, I'd prefer it. However, in my story I made it to where I was the one who caused most of the problems, and as such, I doubt my parents are going to let me leave this place until the loop ends. Besides..." Classic paused, looking over to his badly battered loop brother, who was keeping a look out for Nina. "I don't think my twin is in any shape to go anywhere at the moment after yesterday."

Cynder paused before glanced around once again. "...Alright. I'll go check on that as soon as I'm done eating."

"Sweet. Thanks!"

With that, the phone went silent. Cynder waited for a few seconds before an odd beeping sound started to repeatedly ding from the phone, causing Cynder to hold it away from her head.

"That means the call has ended," Ember said, setting her half-eaten sandwich on the plate. "Hit the 'end' button to make it stop."

Cynder paused, staring blankly at the little buttons on the phone with various numbers on them. Noticing the button that had 'end' on it, she did what Ember told her. As the beeping stopped, she set the phone on the table. Ember glanced over to her.

"So," she asked, a soft yet mischievous smile on her face. "What was that about?"

Cynder paused, looking at Ember out of the corner of her eye. "They wanted me to go to the library to pick up a book for them."

"What kind of book?"

Cynder paused, glancing around to make sure their loop mother wasn't anywhere near them. Once she was sure she wasn't going to hear them, she moved closer to Ember.

"I can't say right now. At most, all I can say is it's important," Cynder whispered before returning to her normal position.

Ember paused before she grinned. "Sounds exciting. Can I tag along?"

Cynder hesitated, looking down at her food. "Uh...I dunno. They kind of asked for me specifically, so..."

Ember frowned slightly, but wasn't deterred. "Do you even know where the library is, though?"

Cynder blinked. She turned her head, looking at Ember and the soft smile that was slowly finding its way onto her face.

"...Not really. Do you?" Cynder retorted, though she didn't mean any hard feelings in her words.

"I think I saw it in all the chaos of yesterday. Besides, even if I didn't, I have a great sense of direction," Ember said, grinning. "I managed to find that café yesterday, didn't I?"

Cynder paused, looking at the enthusiastic pink dragoness. She glanced away, looking back down at her food.

"...Alright," she said before she quickly glanced back at Ember. "But we can't tell anyone else about this. Your Spyro made it clear that he didn't want anyone else knowing about this."

Ember's face lit up as she hopped out of her chair. "No problem. Kind of makes it exciting. Like we're on a secret mission." Ember grinned to herself. "Well, no need to worry! Secret agents Ember and Cynder are on the case!"

Ember paused, hearing a low gurgling sound. Looking back, she grinned sheepishly. "...Right after we finish eating."

Cynder paused before a smile slowly started to make its way onto her face. If nothing else, having a sister was certainly entertaining.

After the call had been made, Classic reapplied the block along with the answering machine loop, relieved that his mother didn't walk in on this act of espionage. He turned to Legend. "Now that the *you know what* has been taken care of, what do you wanna do?"

Legend opened his mouth to answer, but paused. The only things he could think of—going on a walk, or any outdoor activity for that matter—were simply not possible at the moment. "I don't know. Is there anything to do inside?"

Holding a claw to his chin, Classic voiced the options that he could think of. "There's the TV, though I don't think you're the type who

goes for that sort of thing. Books are boring, everyone knows that. I don't know if we have a music player lying around..."

At all but one of these terms, Legend held a flat expression of confusion. Did dragons of this world have that many forms of entertainment? If so, how could anyone be bored?

Classic held his paw to his chin. It was then a smirk appeared on his face. "...Wait, do you like games?"

Legend paused, raising an eyebrow. He hadn't played any sort of game since way back in the swamp before the war. It seemed rather odd, the idea of him trying to play something after everything he'd done in the baseline. Still, if he didn't try to lighten up and had *that* dream again... "It depends, what were you thinking of?"

"I'll explain later, just follow me for a sec."

Classic led his twin to the living room, their mother apparently absent. Making certain that there was a console available, he opened the drawers to find a suitable video game to play. Finally, he came to the correct compartment and sifted through the small library available. *'Let's see, something easy, fun and innocent. We can't afford nightmares tonight.'*

After reading the backs of a few cases that did not fall into the E rating, Classic pulled out one title that fit the bill. The case depicted a rotund pink creature with a happy smile on its face. It appeared to be a rather adorable rendering of a winged wyvern, though Classic wasn't sure since it looked almost like a ball with stubby limbs. *'Dyson Super Star. Eh, it looks sorta girly, but for sake of avoiding nightmare fuel, this'll have to do.'*

Classic retrieved a controller and handed another to Legend, the latter having no idea what his brother had planned. The disc was inserted and the black surface of the panel at the back of living room came to life with opening credits.

"What is this?" Legend asked, raising his eyebrow at the apparently moving painting before him.

Classic smirked and wrapped his paws around the device. "You'll see."

With that, cheery music played and a pink wyvern performed some impressive aeronautics on the screen, ending its routine by taking a place at the center of the screen its his name displayed above it. Legend paused before he shot Classic a flat expression. Classic tried his best not to laugh as he quickly stopped his brother before he dropped the controller.

"OK, I know what you're thinking," Classic said, placing his paw on Legend's shoulder. "And I'm telling you to go along with this. You said it yourself that we can't really do anything else, so just give it a chance, will ya?"

Legend paused, noting how Classic had to make use of his double joints to hold the odd device in his paws. Legend cringed, but it seemed rather disrespectful to leave. Classic was just trying to help him for a change, and as the old proverb goes: 'never judge a book by its cover.'

"Fine," Legend finally said, though he still sat his controller on the ground. "I'm not going to hold this...thing like you, though. There's no way you can make me do that...stuff with my paws."

"Fair enough," Classic conceded. With that, he started a new save file.

Legend thought that his brother's adventures sounded a bit far-fetched. However, nothing could compare to the story of the pink wyvern, who had to chase a fat bird that stole all the food in a place called Dreamland. If that wasn't ridiculous enough, the tutorial informed them that the character's main form of attack was to inhale his opponents and mimic their abilities. Though he was rather

disturbed by that detail, it did not detract from the adorableness that exuded from the sight before him.

"So, how do I play?"

"Here, let me call a helper."

Classic pressed a button and sacrificed his current power-up to let his brother play. The small scabbard that was produced transformed into an armored lizard with a sword, and Legend decided not to question the logic of what had just happened on the screen. His brother put down his controller and proceeded to explain the controls.

"So, the one I'm controlling can't die unless it takes too much damage?" Legend asked, raising an eyebrow.

Classic almost let a sigh escape, but managed to stop himself so that he wouldn't alienate his brother. He figured it best that, considering Legend's world didn't even have video games, he played as the character that had no real penalty for dying. Besides, Legend was doing fine, although he was a little low on health.

"Yeah, if you fall off-screen, you just warp back to me."

"You mean the wyvern?"

"Whatever, let's just keep going." Classic guided the wyvern through a door, and both players were met with a walrus that seemed determined not to let them pass.

"I think we have to fight this gu—"

Interrupted by an ice block that collided with the steel-clad dragon, Legend began to panic as the character began to flash and implode.

"What's happening, what's happening?! Am I dying?!"

"Nonono! You're exploding! Just run into the guy!"

"What guy?!"

"The guy who hit you!"

"How does that help?!"

"Just do it!"

Legend held the D-pad to the right, and when his character collided with the ice-throwing walrus, the explosions stopped as the lizard knight was replaced with a dragon that appeared to be made entirely out of snow. Legend breathed a sigh and Classic finished off the boss. In that moment of relief, however, Legend realized something. Although this 'video game', as his brother called it, appeared to pander to audiences below his age, Legend realized that, for the first time, ever since the loops started, he had forgotten his worries and was enjoying himself. With his own counterpart, for that matter!

'You know, maybe my brother is right. I really needed this, and the fact that we're actually enjoying each other's company makes it all the better.' He smiled at this thought before he turned towards Classic.

"Hey."

Classic paused the game and glanced over to his brother. "Yeah?"

"Thank you, for getting me to play this with you."

Classic smirked. However, for one of the few times in his life, it wasn't his usual cocky smirk. Rather, for once, it was a smirk that carried an aura of sincerity to it. "Thank *you* for playing with me."

Legend smiled, and the two dragons resumed their game.

With a soft smile and crossed arms, Nina watched her sons play together from behind the corner of the living room's entrance. It was

times like these that proved to her that, somehow, despite the situations and crises that seemed to plague this crazy family, she and her husband were still able to raise their kids right.

No matter how many times she ventured out into this city, it never failed to make her feel out of place. Cynder walked along the sidewalk, watching as beings riding in mini-UFOs skimmed along the road. Why they were keeping low to the ground despite being in something that could fly was beyond her, but this world had been so odd to her so far, so who was she to question things at this point? Shaking her head, she looked forward, seeing Ember skipping along with a smile. How this dragoness always seemed to be in an upbeat mood, she would never know. However, as a smile began to appear on her own face, she had to admit that it certainly was contagious.

"I think the library is somewhere around here," Ember said, glancing around at their surroundings. "It wasn't near the park, that much I remember, so there shouldn't be any roadblocks keeping us from getting there."

Cynder watched as Ember began to go down a road. It was so odd at how she seemed to adapt so well to this new world. True, she came from a more technologically advanced world, but even then she would think that these new surroundings would be reason to proceed with caution. Cynder paused, looking down at the ground. Maybe the war from her world had just made her overly cautious?

She shook her head. It was actually a rather odd feeling now that she thought of it, being in a world that *wasn't* torn by war. Maybe she should be grateful for this short reprieve. Having gone through the baseline war so many times, she had managed to desensitize herself to it. Though, having managed to escape *that* part of the baseline, it still didn't make dealing with the eventual clean-up any easier. They could never seem to get to *that* dragon in time to deal with him sooner before the loop reset. Maybe fate demanded that was how things were supposed to go, to make up for everything she'd done in the baseline.

Even after learning the truth about why their world was looping, she still couldn't help but feel like it was punishing her. Cynder glanced upward. If that were true, though, why would she be in this peaceful world right now? Why wasn't she being forced to make her escape from the Well of Souls like the start of every loop?

It was then she blinked. It had never really occurred to her before, but...she wasn't captured by the apes in this loop. As such, she didn't need to escape. It seemed blatantly obvious, but there was one fact that had never really occurred to her.

There was no 'Terror of the Skies' in this loop. Nor was there in the loops she managed to escape the Well of Souls.

Cynder stared blankly down to the ground, on odd sense of joy and anxiety washing over her. She wasn't known for the sins she had committed in this world, because they never happened. As such, no one hated her for something she couldn't have controlled. Deep down, part of her wanted to start jumping for joy, and yet...another part of her still felt guilty. Even if she hadn't done anything wrong in this loop, would it be disrespectful to all those she'd wronged in the baseline if she were to attempt live a normal life for one loop, completely guilt-free after what she had done?

She shook her head. If Spyro were here, he'd probably say—

Cynder's train of thought was interrupted as a shrill shriek pierced the air. She raised her head, eyes wide as she realized that Ember was nowhere to be seen. Without a moment's hesitation, she took to the air and began to scan the area.

Ember trembled as she backed up against a wall. Why, why, *why* did she have to take this path? Holding onto her necklace tightly with both paws, she gulped as a hooded figure holding a knife slowly drew closer.

"Alright, cutie. Just hand over the necklace and no one gets hurt!"

Ember began to shake more violently as the hooded figure drew closer. "Please, just leave me alone! This necklace was a gift from my parents!"

"Sorry, lady, but I get the feeling that a gem like that would fetch quite the pretty penny."

Ember clutched her necklace even tighter as the figure kept getting closer. As he lunged at her, Ember closed her eyes and let out a shriek.

However, the knife-wielding criminal never reached his target. Instead, he let out a holler of pain as he was slashed across the chest, his robe tearing open and a large gash staining his fur crimson. Ember dared to open her eyes and was instantly grateful for the sight before her.

Cynder stood between the would-be mugger and Ember, glaring sharply at the knife-wielding nut as she took a battle stance.

"Leave," she said coldly, hunkering down with a scowl on her face. *" Now. "*

The would-be mugger wasn't impressed. Brandishing his knife, he held his paw over his wound. "Out of the way, lady. This is none of your business."

Cynder narrowed her eyes. "You *made* it my business when you attempted to rob my sister. Now, I will tell you again. If you don't want to be torn limb from limb, I'd suggest heeding my first warning."

The mugger scoffed. "Oh? And exactly how do you expect to do *that?* "

'Wrong answer.'

Before the mugger knew what hit him, he was slammed in the chest by a head-smash and sent sliding back. Cynder stood before him

with a scowl on her face. The mugger growled, picking up his knife as he held it in front of him.

"Alright, you little bitch, you asked for it!"

Cynder watched as the mugger charged at her knife first. Dodging easily, she retorted with a claw slash across the mugger's stomach. The mugger staggered back, but before he could recover, he was smacked across the face with a tail strike and a gust of wind sent him tumbling back, the knife falling onto the ground and sliding a ways away.

The mugger grabbed his head as he picked himself up. He went to go for his knife, but was blocked when Cynder stepped in front of him. Narrowing her eyes, she scowled.

"I will say it again," Cynder said in a cold tone. " *Leave.* "

The mugger gulped before he got to his feet and ran. Cynder kept a close eye on him until she was sure he wouldn't be turning around for a sneak attack as soon as she turned her back. Once she felt like things were once again safe, she turned to Ember.

"You al— *?!* " Cynder began, but was cut off when Ember ran towards her and threw her forelegs around her.

Ember was shaking badly from the ordeal as she rested her head on Cynder's shoulder. Mentally, Cynder froze for a few seconds. Awkwardly, she patted Ember on the back.

"Uh, it's...it's okay now. You're safe..." Cynder said, glancing upwards.

"Thank you..." Ember muttered, still holding on tightly as she tried her best to hold herself together.

Cynder paused before she closed her eyes and put one foreleg around Ember. She could worry about the morality of how she

should handle loops where the Terror of the Skies never happened later. For this loop, at the very least, she could attempt to be a good sister.

"Did you get to see the hooded figure's face?"

"No," Cynder said, her expression going flat. "He *was* wearing a hood, after all."

"Now, now. There's no need to get snippy," the dragon officer stated, looking down at the dragoness. "I know that was a frightening experience and all, having to fight him off, but *we're* only here to help."

"Oh, I wasn't frightened, though," Cynder said, a slightly condescending tone in her voice. "To be perfectly honest, he was rather bad at mugging."

The officer's expression flattened at the slight grin on Cynder's face. Regardless, he shook it off.

"Well, I'm not sure if we'll turn up anything, considering we don't have much to go on, but we'll be on the look out," the officer said before he turned around and walked off.

Cynder said nothing. From what she had seen of the law enforcement of this world so far, she likely had a better chance of catching this guy herself. Regardless, she shook it off. The Spyros were counting on her to get that book, so she didn't have much time to go around and deliver some vigilante justice. Turning around, she looked at Ember. Ember was still shaking slightly, taking deep breaths as she held on to her necklace. Cynder's expression softened.

"You sure you're going to be alright?"

"H-huh?" Ember asked, raising her head. Nervously, she glanced back down. "Oh, y...yeah..."

Cynder frowned, walking over to Ember and placing a paw on her back. Ember forced a smile, though it didn't fool Cynder. Making sure to keep close by her, they went back to their search for the library.

Of all foods that Legend had encountered so far, this dish proved to be the most difficult. His mother had called him and his brother to the table for what she called "beef noodle soup." Pieces of meat, vegetables, and what appeared to be very thin ribbons of entrails, floated within a flavored liquid of some sort. At least, Legend thought it would be flavored, though he couldn't tell because he singed his tongue trying to get a taste. Classic and Nina stared at this display, one exhausted by his brother's aversion to silverware, the other concerned about her son's burns.

"Spyro, be helpful and show your brother how to use the spoon I gave him."

With that, Classic found an opportunity to gross out his brother. Snickering as he did so, he shifted one of his claws into a thumb position and, at that, Legend was too revolted to look away.

"You hold it like this and then you dip the spoon into the soup." Classic returned the filled utensil in front of his mouth. "You blow to cool it down, and then you can drink it."

After this short tutorial, Classic noticed a good-looking piece of meat suspended in the mixture, and another wicked thought crossed his mind. He put down his spoon in favor of chopsticks, and made sure to showcase his skill with the utensils by picking out the morsel, rolling in a bunch of rice noodles as well. Legend could barely fathom how this...abomination was possible, and had almost resolved to thoroughly eradicate every piece of cutlery in existence had an expectant glare from his mother not discouraged him from doing so.

"Go on, follow your brother's example, unless you want to burn your face again."

Legend could not dispute this. He slowly flipped the direction of his claw, trying to hold in his lunch as he did so, and successfully found the correct grip on his spoon. Lowering it to his soup, he managed to snag some meat as well as some of the 'entrails.' Exhaling a defeated sigh, he cooled the liquid down to tolerable temperature and inserted the broth into his mouth. When he did, Legend savored his first sizable cut of meat ever since the loop had started, but he encountered an unexpected flavor from the entrails. They didn't possess the flavor of intestines at all, they tasted of...bread?!

'What the heck is it with dragons and bread in this loop?'

Classic could barely suppress his laughter at his brother's plight, and managed to catch the evil eye from Legend. At that, Legend decided that a small dose of revenge would be in order. *'Just you wait, brother. You'll get yours, soon enough...'*

Cynder couldn't help but wonder if leaving the house would always be so eventful in this world. If it wasn't her mate getting into an argument with himself from another universe and snapping into his dark form, it was her loop sister nearly getting mugged by the worst mugger on the planet. She glanced over, Ember walking close by her side as she kept her head low. Cynder frowned softly. It was such a drastic change from how she had been this morning. Looking forward, she frowned. If she ever got her claws on that mugger again...

Cynder sighed, shaking her head. There was no use focusing on that subject. That mugger was likely long gone by now. She glanced over to the medical spellbooks in the satchel the library had provided for her. The library had a decent collection of them, and she wasn't sure what the other Spyro's level of skill was when it came to magic. As such, she decided to get a few of varying skill level just in case.

"We're here." Ember's voice was barely a sigh.

Cynder glanced over to her with a concerned look, placing a wing over her before she looked over to the house the Spyros were in. The other Spyro didn't want their loop parents finding out about this, so she needed a way to get in without being spotted. A simple task with the use of her shadow element, but...

Cynder looked at Ember again. "I need to sneak inside there because your Spyro doesn't want their parents finding out about this. Will you be okay by yourself for a few seconds?"

"U-uh..." Ember said, looking down at the ground. "M-maybe, if I stay close to the house."

Cynder frowned. She didn't exactly like idea of leaving her behind, but she didn't have much of a choice. Taking one last glance to make sure no one was sneaking up on them, Cynder dived into the nearby bushes and began to crawl out of sight. Once she was sure Ember couldn't see her, she dove into her shadow and began to make her way into the house through the windows.

Legend wasn't sure how he had managed to keep his meal down after that display. If he ever saw another piece of silverware again, it'd be too soon. Legend sighed. Didn't help that his brother kept getting a kick out of him having to force down his meal while trying *not* to pay attention to the unnatural position he had his claws in. He shook his head. At the very least, Nina forcing his brother to help with the dishes as further punishment for yesterday had given him some time to think of a way to get revenge.

Turning the corner and entering his room, he paused. Cynder smiled at him.

"Hey," she said, setting the satchel of books down.

Legend smiled, walking up to her. "Hey."

"Brought the books your counterpart wanted. Wasn't sure how good with magic he was, so I got a bunch," Cynder said, motioning to the books. "Hope he isn't driving you *too* crazy here."

Legend chuckled. "Actually, despite everything that happened yesterday, he actually isn't all that bad. There's *some* poking and prodding, but it wasn't as bad as yesterday." Legend smiled. "So, how's your day been?"

"Oh, nothing too much. Saved Ember from a mugger while we were heading to the library; nothing I couldn't really handle."

"What? Are you alright?" Legend asked, his eyes going wide.

"Oh, yeah. I'm fine. Ember's still a bit shaken up from it, though..." Cynder said, glancing back. "I should probably be getting back to her. Hopefully it won't always be an experience when we have to go outside," she joked as she turned to walk away.

"Hold on," Legend said, getting up to follow her. "Are you sure you can't stay for a bit longer?"

"Sorry, Spyro," Cynder said, turning around towards him. "I know we haven't gotten to spend much time together this loop, but Ember needs me. I don't know why, but I think part of me likes having a little sister to look out for."

Seeing Legend frown, Cynder got closer to him. She smiled. "Don't worry. The next loop we're in where we have some free time like this, I promise we'll spend it together."

At this, Legend smiled. Leaning forward, he pressed his lips against Cynder's. It was a brief kiss, but one that they both savored. Once it was done, they leant their foreheads against each other with a smile.

"I love you."

"I love you too."

With that, as much as she would have enjoyed staying like that, Cynder eventually broke from the pose and disappeared into her shadow. Watching her go out the window, Legend smiled. He turned around to head towards his bed. It was only then that he noticed the figure standing by the door.

Classic stood frozen, his face in the biggest scowl he had ever managed to pull. His eyes opened wide, his pupils shrinking to an unnatural size as he tried to process what he had just seen. Seeing his state of distress, Legend blinked.

"...What?"

Not a second later, a shriek of horror echoed throughout the block.

"Once I'm done finding a spell for third-degree burns, I'm gonna find a cure for third-degree love sickness," Classic spat as he paged through *Drake's Anatomy* .

As Classic focused on his search with an annoyed scowl, Legend had a mind to slap his annoying twin across the face. How dare he scorn his relationship with Cynder! Legend was just about ready to raise his paw, while Classic was snout-deep in his reading, but he paused. Now that he thought about it, he didn't really know enough about his counterpart when it came to delivering proper retribution. So far, his disdain for love was the only thing he knew about him so far that he disliked...

A devious grin appeared on Legend's face. It was time to give Classic a taste of his own medicine.

"Actually, I don't think that'll be necessary."

Classic glanced up at this. "Oh?"

"Yup," Legend said, walking over to him with a devious smile. "Love sure is grand. Did you know that there are over twenty methods of

kissing?"

Legend's question came all the way from left field for the celibate purple dragon. After what he had put Legend through at lunch, now it was Classic's turn to try to refrain from upchucking. Trying his best to keep a straight face, he focused his attention more on the book he was reading. "Th-that's... *nice* ."

Wanting to prod his brother even more, Legend put on a wistful expression. "But there's far more to love than just kissing, you know. There are pet-nicknames too, like Honey-bun..."

Classic narrowed his eyes, lowering his head closer to the book as he flipped through pages with more vigor.

"Smoochie-poo..."

Classic growled, bringing his head down closer as he began flipping through the pages faster than any being could possibly read. With an air of smugness, Legend smirked, ready to finish Classic off with the most despicable name that he could muster.

"Wubbykins..."

Finally, Classic couldn't take it anymore as he placed his claws over his ears. *"NOPENOPENOPENOPE! Can't hear you! NOPENOPENOPENOPE!"*

Legend began to bust up laughing. *'I think I'm beginning to understand why my brother loves poking and prodding so much!'*

Classic growled, trying his best to block out his brother as he began reading through the pages reasonably again. *Finally* finding suitable enchantments for both he and his brother, he sighed, hoping he could quickly change the subject. Fighting the urge to push his brother off his bed, Classic overlaid his magic sense on his sight and installed three spells from the tome archive before him: two for his

and his brother's specific injuries, and an all-purpose first-aid enchantment, in case of emergency.

He planned to remove the former once they did their job, but he would keep the latter. After all that had happened so far, it couldn't hurt to prepare for the future. All this went through Classic's mind as he continuously declined his brother's irritating love nicknames. "OK, shut your face! I've got a burn heal spell for ya."

Legend complied, and felt his damaged skin and scales begin to undergo a metamorphosis. A brief glow shined from within Legend's body, reforming his discolored, sensitive scales back to their polished, healthy state. At this, Legend felt a great burden lift from his back, and he was about to jump off the bed and walk right out the front door when his brother stopped him.

"Wait! The instructions said that you have to avoid physical activity for a few hours so your body can get accustomed to the sudden appearance of new tissue, whatever that means. I take it that bad things will happen if you don't."

"Oh, fine then. What about your spell? Do you have to rest as well?"

"Yeah. Lucky me, huh?" Classic sighed as he applied the gash-healing spell to himself, the magic filling the scar tissue under his bandages. "I guess we can still play Dyson while we're healing." A smirk appeared on his face. "Oh, by the way, we're having leftovers from today's soup for dinner, so make sure to bring something to barf in."

A curt smile found its way onto Classic's face, and Legend's victory was dashed. Legend may have turned his brother's tactics against him, but he still had much to learn in the ancient and mystical art of trolling.

"Flash! Come here for a second."

Nina's husband had just arrived from work, and with a slight tone of frustration, he asked, "What?"

"Try calling. The number you put in doesn't matter."

A call was made, and an answering machine was heard. Slightly confused, Flash picked out the Artisan language out of the options that were given, and he was perplexed to hear the machine list its options repeatedly.

"Does this happen with every phone number you call?"

With a nod, Nina confirmed this. "I tried to call the hospital yesterday, but the same thing happened."

Flash's eyes bugged out at this. What if they couldn't call 911 because of this malfunction? "We'll have to call the company to fix this. I'll visit our neighbors to see if we can borrow their phone for a bit."

He plodded out the front door, leaving Nina to reminisce on the events of the last couple of days. *'Just our luck. Three disasters in two days, and all this is happening a few days before Elora comes to visit. The worst part will be when she sees our sons. She'll be so heart-broken, the poor soul. She would have taken them out for a treat or on an adventure, but now... I guess college is the only thing she'll have to look forward to.'*

She stopped her preoccupied thoughts when she heard yelling and arguing from upstairs. Nothing lasts forever, and it was inevitable that her sons would start their sibling rivalry again. Nina wasn't even surprised that it had resumed so quickly after what had happened yesterday. As long as they didn't start roughhousing, she decided to let the Spyros bicker.

Maybe Flash was right. They should be old enough to deal with their own problems, especially the ones that they caused for each other. Of course, that didn't mean that she couldn't make sure of that. Yes,

this was Nina's new resolution. If they could solve their own problems, then they should have no issue over her listening to their arguments, just to make sure they never escalated. You can never be too safe, right? Her sons didn't lie to her about what happened yesterday, *right?*

It was decided. Nina walked up the stairs, expecting that she could simply stand outside the door and eavesdrop on her sons' banter. She would have no such luck, however, when the Spyros got up and walked out of their room. Nina saved face and opened the hallway closet, making it appear that she was simply putting away clothes. Once they had disappeared from sight, Nina heard music and sound effects reverberating from the living room. *'Playing more video games? I would tell them to do something else, but it's a very convenient distraction at the moment.'*

Even though her opportunity to hear it straight from the horse's mouth was dashed, Nina could still investigate the bedroom for any leads. It would have been a rather cunning plan had Classic neglected to put the collection of medical tomes in his subspace. Instead of finding evidence, she found nothing. On top of that, now that her sons were playing those games, their conversation wouldn't be very informative. *'I just have a feeling. Something doesn't add up. That nightmare Spyro had proves that they're trying to hide something from me, but what could it be?'*

A creak was heard from the front door, and Nina was interrupted in her investigation. She briskly descended from the second floor and greeted Flash while he was closing the door.

"So? Did you call the phone company?"

"Yeah, they said that they would send one of their magicians over to check it out. Said it wouldn't take long. So, what's for dinner?"

"Beef noodle soup."

As Legend attempted to beat the boss without his brother's help, he felt a sudden chill in his scales.

Dinner had been awkwardly silent for Cynder. Ember had barely touched her food, and their loop mother had been spouting worry and concern all throughout dinner after she had told her what had happened. Even when Cynder had assured her she was fine, and that Ember was the one who was most shaken up from it, their mother still treated her with as much concern as she did for Ember.

It was an odd feeling, having a parent who cared for you.

Cynder looked up at the ceiling as she laid in her bed. It was rather unconventional for dragons of her world to sleep in beds, but so was a lot of the things dragons did in this world. Shaking her head, she couldn't help but let her mind wander. In baseline, she never knew who her family was. Even when the war was over, her parents never came forward to confront her. Maybe they were trying, but couldn't find her before the loops started up? Or maybe they had died in the war? Or maybe, after everything she had done in the baseline, they had more or less disowned her...?

Cynder sighed. *'I wouldn't be surprised...'*

Cynder rolled to her side. Maybe that was why she was so protective of her loop family. Even if they technically weren't family, they showed her what it was like to be part of one. Even Ember, another looper who was aware they weren't really related, had been more than willing to treat her like a sister with open paws.

Cynder closed her eyes. She had never seen a dragon with such innocent naivety before. Having come from a world of war, it was actually a nice change to see someone who was so innocent, who viewed the world through rose-tinted glasses instead of jaded. It was both a blessing and a curse. Ember may live a happier life than most, but it left her open to what had happened to her today. It was

some rather cruel irony. When you believe the best in people, it hurts all the more when they betray you.

'I should probably check on her,' Cynder thought, raising up and getting ready to jump out of her bed. She paused, however, she heard her door start to creak.

Raising her head, she saw Ember peering in from behind the door. Her head was held low as she stared at Cynder and entered the room. Cynder raised an eyebrow.

"Ember? You alright?"

"Uh... I...I don't really know anymore..."

Ember shuffled around nervously as she sat down. She glanced up, looking at Cynder with a slightly blank expression.

"Cynder?" she asked, her eyes darting downward.

"Yeah...?"

"You...you know how to fight, right?"

At this, Cynder looked at Ember curiously. "Yeah... Why?"

Ember glanced down, fiddling with her claws on the floor as she paused. An awkward air filled the room as Cynder waited for a response. Finally, Ember glanced up just enough to make eye contact with Cynder.

"Can you...teach me?"

Cynder blinked. Ember looked up with a slight determined glint in her eyes. "Can you please teach me how to fight?"

Cynder watched as the pink dragoness walked up and place her forepaws on her bed. Ember had a soft frown on her face, her eyes

pleading under the determined glint. Cynder blinked, backing up slightly as she stared at Ember with eyes wide in confusion. Once the shock had worn off, Cynder leant back into her normal sitting position.

"Ember... This has to do with what happened today, doesn't it?"

Ember glanced down slightly. "Kind of..." she said before she looked back up at Cynder. "I was reading through that book Ihy gave us, and it said how the loops won't always be the same. I didn't think much of it, but after today..."

Cynder raised an eyebrow. "Why do you want me to teach you? Haven't you tried learning this in your own world?"

"Once, but..." Ember said, glancing down, "the only one who knows proper self-defence arts in my world, Sensei Ragnar, is really picky about who he'll train. He even refused to teach my world's Spyro at first, so it's pretty obvious what his response was when I asked him to train me."

Ember looked up at Cynder before she sighed. "Besides, up until now, I didn't think I'd need to learn how to. The biggest variation I had to deal with so far was the loop where I replaced my Spyro in his first three adventures. I managed to get through that somehow, even though I had to rely on everyone else's help during the end there, and with how the loop resets everything back to a certain date, I thought I could handle whatever it could throw at me."

Grabbing her necklace, Ember glanced down. "But after today... I don't know anymore. If ending up in different worlds is a common possibility, what if I end up in an even more dangerous world? A world where everything is out to get me, or danger is around every single corner? I—I'm just..." Ember sighed, closing her eyes, "...scared."

Cynder watched as Ember lowered her head onto her bed. Her gaze softened. As much as she wanted to help her loop sister, she

couldn't help but glance away. She had never been asked to teach someone before, and wasn't sure if she *could* properly teach someone to fight. All the skills she had learned were either self-taught or brought on by dark magic. She never had a proper teacher when it came to fighting.

And yet, Ember's reasoning was sound. Though for her, this was the biggest loop variation so far, what was to stop the Powers That Be from throwing her into a world she couldn't handle? The ancestors only knew how well things might go if Ember ended up in Cynder's world for a loop.

The thought caused Cynder to cringe. She hadn't even thought about that while she was in this world. What if Ember had looped in to a loop where she wasn't awake? Where the Terror of the Skies was still a threat? She would be completely defenceless and at the mercy of the evil she couldn't control...

Cynder shook her head. She wasn't about to let that happen to her sister. "Alright. I'll train you, but you have to promise me this."

Ember raised her head, Cynder looking her straight in the eyes.

"Promise me you'll only ever use what I teach you to defend yourself, and if you're ever in danger, always try to get away from it first if you can, instead of fighting it."

Ember perked up slightly. With a soft smile, she nodded. "I promise."

"Good," Cynder said, laying down on her bed. "We'll start tomorrow morning."

As Cynder laid down in her bed, she was caught off guard when a pair of paws pulled her into a hug.

"Thank you."

Though her smile was a bit uncomfortable, Cynder tapped her paw on one of Ember's forelegs to return the gesture. As Ember let go and started to exit the room, Cynder glanced her way. A soft smile appeared on her face. Having a sister was a bit odd, but she had to admit, she was enjoying having Ember as one too.

(And here we have it. Slowly but surely, the Spyros are warming up to each other. Poor Ember, though. At least this happened in a loop where she had someone who could quickly help her. I feel like it may seem odd to some how quickly Cynder warmed up to her, but it's as it was written in this chapter. Cynder's never had a family before. At least Legend Spyro had his adopted dragonfly parents and Sparx. Not only did she not even have that, she also had to put up with people hating her in the baseline because of the 'Terror of the Skies' incident. It's not too far-fetched to think she would become really protective of the few people who treat her like friend or family member or managed to get past the shell she put around herself or...something deep and...psychological like that. /shot

Anyways, something I derped and forgot about last chapter. I wanted to answer some common questions that have been popping up about this story. There's not too many, but they're frequent enough to warrant an official response in the fic. So let's get started, shall we?

1: "Will the Spyros eventually replace each other in their worlds for a loop?": I'd like to tease and be as ambiguous as possible about this but... Yeah, I'm pretty sure that's obligatory in a fic like this. :P Whether or not it'll be anytime soon... We'll just have to wait and see.

2: "Will the current story arc go into some episodic shenanigans for a bit?": Yes, but for only like two or three chapters. Reason being is because, while we *do* plan on this becoming serious again, thrusting the characters into another serious part of the story while they're still getting use to each

other would be a bit... I dunno, it feels a bit too quick to me. Besides, I originally intended this part to be a bunch of comedic snips where the characters try to adjust to each other anyways. Believe it or not, the Classic Spyro VS Legend Spyro fight wasn't planned from the start. It just kind of happened as we wrote. That said, this arc will take a more serious and action tone like the Spyro fight, but exactly what causes that... Well, that's a secret for now. ;P

3: "...Why ponies? I mean, seriously? :/": Well, there are actually several reasons for this. Quite possibly the number one reason is, while Innortal started the Infinite Loops, Saphroneth's FiM loops were more or less what 'codified' the Infinite Loops as a whole. In fact, if it weren't for him, the Spyro loops and several other loops fics might not even exist. Combine that with the fact that the FiM loops are the only 'canon' 'sanctuary loop' [i.e. a loop where the loopers help visiting loopers with their problems as well as help them unwind and relax]... Yeah, with how their baseline goes, Legend Spyro and Cynder could use a break.

There's also the fact that, from the stuff I've written so far, the Classic characters just *work* with FiM characters. Their personalities bounce off each other rather well, and not in the 'gah, ponies' way. A lot of rather interesting and humorous scenarios have already popped up from it, and it just...I don't know. I really can't say anything else other than it just *works* , for whatever reason.

I didn't really think it was anything too big considering, from what I've seen, a lot of Spyro fans seem to be FiM fans too. That said, I realize that not *everyone* likes FiM, so I *am* going to try and tone it down when I can but...yeah. I still have a lot of ideas with that, so...

4: "Will there be any future story arcs?": Possibly. I have some ideas for a Halloween arc, but I'd like to see the reception this arc gets when it's complete before I decide. [So far it's been pretty positive, though, surprisingly.]

...And that's pretty much it for now. I'll likely do another one of these Q&A things in the future when more questions pop up, but for now those are the most frequent questions I tend to get at the moment.

Now then, will the Spyros be able to keep their secret while getting used to each other? How will Ember handle learning to fight? And what of Hunter and Sparx? Find out next time!

Remember to leave review because it really helps us out. We like to know what you enjoyed and what we can improve on!

EDIT: Forgot a part of this chapter because I'm pretty great like that. You know, that little part where Legend is actually having a nightmare and all. /shot

At any rate, at the very least it lets me address an anonymous review I got asking about the possibility of a 'Classic' Cynder. I suppose it really goes without saying, but we're mostly trying to stick to 'canon' outside of stuff like this. Unless, by some stroke of luck, another Classic series game is made that includes Legend characters like Cynder in it, *then* will try to figure out how to incorporate stuff like that in. Until then though, we're mostly going to be sticking to established characters.)

A day for answers (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

(Fused loop 1.1 continued) (Feats: TokoWH, UkeleleNarwhal, and AbZHz101)

Ihy groaned. Once again, Legend Sparx had decided to grace the apartment with his presence, and once again he more or less demanded the TV be turned on.

And once again, the small yellow dragonfly was proceeding to get on the admin's nerves.

" *Come on! Come! Go, go, go!* " Sparx chanted, watching as one of the dragons on TV ran down a giant fielding holding on odd cylinder shaped thing in his paws while several dragons chased after him. As the dragon jumped towards the end of the field and slammed the ball on the ground, Sparx raised his hands in the air. *"Yeah! Touchdown! Wooh!"*

The dragonfly quickly paused, before turning to Ihy. "... that's a good thing, right?"

Ihy let out a long, exasperated sigh. "Hunter!"

"Yeah, yeah. You know, you wouldn't have to deal with this if you were, ya' know, actually doing your job." Hunter teased, before he went over to one of the chairs in front of the TV and sat down.

As Hunter began explaining the finer details of football to Legend Sparx, Ihy sighed in relief. So far, this loop seemed to be running rather smoothly, and despite Legend Sparx's attempt at annoying him to death, that meant he could continue to enjoy what little of this break he had left. As he began typing on his laptop however, the screen promptly froze for a split second, as static flickered crossed the screen.

Ihy raised an eyebrow, getting up to check the screen. Not a second later, his web browser was brought up, as he noticed he had an email. Clicking on it, he was brought to an almost blank page, the only things notable about it were the written words on it.

"'Sup moron? Have to say, using a spork to bypass the failsafe to keep non-loopers from accidentally being written out was some interesting MacGyvering. You have me curious now about who this non-looper is, if he's considered so dangerous that you'd rather risk permanently erasing him instead of dumping him in another universe with uber loopers in it.

How about we play game, then? I kind of want to see this guy in action, so I took the liberty of "reintroducing" him into the Loop. Only had to tweak one Ancient Civi to do it too! :P Don't worry, it only changed like one or two things in the present, and you've gotta love that high conviction rate! Not only that, but I get a new fav program out of the deal too! I wonder if they would have stayed stable had they been a different species? But then again, had they gone preemptively nuts you might have noticed, and the game would have been over before it even began! But hey, I believe in fair play, so I got the bad boy sealed up in a spork somewhere in here. If you can find it, then I guess you win.

PS: I've also disabled your ability to teleport to Yggdrasil for the time being so you can't just rewrite him out of the loop. After all, where'd the fun in that be? :D

- The third son of Cythulu; Zoth-Ommog."

Ihy felt his left eye begin to twitch. Immediately, he began to bring up the teleportor function on his laptop. As soon as he attempted to teleport back to his terminal, he was instead met with a fart sound ringing from his laptop's speakers. Ihy looked over to Hunter and Sparx, the two of them looking at him with wide eyes.

"... that wasn't me, if that's what you're thinking." Ihy said, before focusing back on his laptop.

'This is bad! Of all the times they decided to crawl out of their hole, it HAD to be when I was already on watch for what I did before both Dragon Realms started looping!'

Ihy thought, a scowl on his face as he began furiously tapping away at his keyboard. *'If the other admins found out about this, I can kiss my adminhood goodbye!'*

"... you okay?"

"Hm?" Ihy muttered, looking up to see Hunter looking at him. "Oh! Yeah, sure, sure. Everything is perfectly fine! No need to worry!"

Ihy gave a phony toothy smile, prompting Hunter and Sparx to look at each other with raised eyes. As the two went back to their ramblings, Ihy took a deep breath.

'Okay, stay calm. At least it seems like I got a more forgiving rogue here...'

Ihy thought, now typing away at his keyboard slower. *'If he did what I think he did and wrote Malefor back into the loop, albeit sealed in a...'* Ihy paused, his face going blank. *'... **spork...** All I need to do is find it and keep it hidden for the rest of the loop. Should be simple enough, and I won't have to worry about the other admins ragging on me in what was suppose to be a peaceful variant.'*

With that, Ihy grabbed his beer can and took a sip. The game of drunken cat and mouse had began...

The air was far too cold in this 'hospital' for Legend's liking. Sitting awkwardly in his chair as he looked around nervously, he glanced over to his counterpart, slowly leaning over to him while their mother was talking with the doctor.

"Are you sure this was a good idea? Maybe we should have tried to delay this a bit longer..." Legend whispered, keeping an eye on their

loop mother in case she turned back towards them.

"Relax. Now that I healed our wounds, the doctors won't suspect anything else major," Classic whispered back, glancing over to his counterpart. "Besides, we couldn't delay this for too long, anyways. If I messed with the phone lines again after this world's magicians fixed it, Mom would know something's up."

Legend sat back in his chair as he turned his attention back to their loop mother. It was far too early in the morning to be dealing with this kind of worry. Legend watched as Nina stared at the doctor in disbelief, said doctor merely adjusting his glasses calmly.

"I'm telling you, you merely overreacted. From the tests that I've run, your boys are perfectly fine. Any wounds we found on them will heal naturally in only a matter of days."

"B-but...!" Nina protested, glancing back towards her children before looking back at the doctor. "You didn't see them when they first returned home! They looked like they had been mauled by a monster!"

Legend flinched. The doctor shook his head before he shrugged. He had seen Nina's type before. The overprotective mother who thinks their child is going to bleed to death from a paper cut. Those kinds of dragons were *always* fun to deal with...

"I don't know what to tell you, then. *If* they *were* as bad as you're making it out to be, then the only explanation I could come up with is that their wounds were healed magically."

Legend flinched again, but a quick glare from Classic was enough for him to reinstate his poker face. Classic managed to keep his cool rather well. Even if the doctor was smart enough to correctly guess that, there was no way he could prove it.

'...That would explain why they don't have their scars anymore,' Nina thought, her once again paranoid mind kicking into overdrive. If she

could prove that, then she could prove to Flash they were hiding something, and she could finally get the real story out of them. Looking at the doctor with innocent eyes that managed to hide the deceit behind them, she put her plan into motion.

"Well then, isn't there any test you can do to check if magic was involved?"

"Well...there is, but it's a fair bit pricey."

At this, Legend nearly jumped out of his seat as he began to sweat bullets. He looked over to his counterpart, who was gritting his teeth, his eyes wide. Once again letting loose a string of profanities in his mind, Classic's mind went into overdrive as he tried to think of a way to save both their hides. As much as he didn't like it, him and his counterpart might need to spend the rest of the loop halfway across the realm after all.

Nina raised an eyebrow. "How pricey are we talking?"

"Well..." the doctor said, adjusting his glasses. "Around one hundred and fifty thousand gems."

" One hundred and fifty thousand gems!? " Nina exclaimed, nearly falling back onto the floor as her eyes went wide. "Th-that— *you have to be joking!* "

"Well, give or take," the doctor said, his glasses having an unnatural shine to them. "Magical residue from healing spells is incredibly hard to detect even for the most advanced of machinery. It would take multiple tests and requesting a few specialists before we get anything even resembling a positive," the doctor said, readjusting his glasses once again. "...And, again, the sum I gave is just an estimate."

Nina's jaw dropped as her eyes stayed wide open. Finally, she shook her head. As much as she wanted to prove something was up, it was *not* worth breaking her bank account to do it. Besides, her babies

would be alright regardless. For now, she could at least find solace in that fact.

"Well, thank you for your *help,* anyway," Nina said, turning back towards her children. "But I think being able to pay our bills and groceries comes first."

Classic breathed a sigh of relief as Legend nearly fainted in his chair. Never once had Classic thought he would ever be thankful for overblown doctor bills.

Nina grew discouraged from the hospital visit. As she and her pair of sons journeyed back home, her theories began to fall flat. Without any evidence, she couldn't interrogate her children with a clear conscience. Currently, nearly all the evidence pointed against her ideas, and she decided that, until she could find irrefutable proof that her sons were lying, she would have to let go of the issue.

Classic and Legend were unsettled by their mother's silence. Ever since the appointment, she hadn't spoken a word. Classic stayed by her side, while Legend stepped ahead of Nina and expressed his concern. "Mom, are you OK?"

She snapped out of her ruminations and responded with a faked smile. "Of course, sweetie. I was just thinking, is all." As she responded, Nina noticed that her sons were more agile than the day before yesterday. Perhaps their injuries weren't as severe as she'd thought.

Classic spotted the familiar building in the distance; they were almost home, and once again he would be confined to his room. He didn't resent this at first, but this was going to be a problem. Legend may have dodged a nightmare last night, but it wasn't guaranteed that playing video games would always work. If all that he had ever experienced was war, then Classic had to make this loop one that his brother would remember. To do that, they had to get out of the house.

"Um... Mom?"

Nina turned her attention to her bandaged son. "Yes, Spyro?"

"Since the doctor said that our injuries weren't that bad, could my brother and I go to the library?"

At this, Nina frowned. They had just come back from the hospital, and now her children wanted to go somewhere else? "I don't know, after everything that happened these past few days... On top of that, you're still grounded."

Realizing that his brother was trying to circumvent the punishment that should have been his, Legend rushed in to help. "I'll stay by his side to make sure he doesn't get into trouble. But the library is a safe place, isn't it?"

Nina contemplated this. One half urged her to never let these two out of her sight again, and the other half reasoned that she had overreacted, especially when she'd mummified one of her sons in bandages. She struggled to make a decision until Classic made a final plea.

"Please, Mom? I promise I'll be good. We can do some errands for you too, if you need it." As Classic said this, he focused his honed charms of cuteness, developed from the countless loops where he had parents to deal with.

It was a merciless display and Nina finally gave in. Besides, there wasn't much in the refrigerator the last time she'd checked. "Oh... fine. When we get back home, I'll give you two a grocery list, and when you're done reading books, I need you to do the shopping. Stick together this time, and if anything happens, you'll both be grounded until the end of time. Understand?"

"Yes, Mom," both Spyros answered.

With that, Classic began to organize his itinerary for the day. By the end of this loop, Legend would relearn what it meant to be a kid.

There were many challenges Classic had learned to overcome during the baseline, and even a bit into the loops. Some of them physical, some of them mental, but all of them so far paled in comparison to that of trying to get his best friends in a ten mile radius of his loop brother after how he'd leveled the park a few days ago and nearly killed them in a dark-form-fueled rage. He glanced over to his loop brother, who was holding his head low, before glancing over to Hunter and Sparx. They were a good distance away from them, hiding behind a skate ramp while glaring at Legend. Classic face-palmed.

"Don't worry." Classic sighed, shaking his head. "I'll go talk to them."

With that, Classic began to walk up to his paranoid friends as Legend awkwardly looked around the 'skate park' they were in. As soon as Classic got in earshot, Hunter was there to give him an earful.

"Spyro, bro," Hunter said, glancing down at the dragon. "You know that I'm more than willing to follow you on whatever crazy idea you've cooked up, looping or baseline, but... *have you lost your mind!?* " Hunter exclaimed, throwing his arms up into the air.

"Hunter."

"I mean, that's the same dragon that a few days ago tried to rip us limb from limb!"

"Hunter..."

"For Pete's sake, Spyro! If it was a non-looping Ripto or Gnasty and it was for some elaborate prank, *then* maybe I'd go through with it, considering how easily you can kick their butts! But this dragon is

more or less your looping evil counterpart! Spyro, you have to admit —"

"Hunter!" Classic finally interrupted Hunter's paranoid ramblings as he caused the cheetah to jump. He shook his head and sighed.

"Listen, I've been hanging out with him for the past few days. He's honestly *not* a bad dragon," Classic said, looking up at his friends. "He just comes from a world of war. That whole 'uber evil side' thing was the result of said world, and only pops up when he's pushed over the edge."

Classic sighed again and looked down. "And, considering how much of a jerk I was to him when we first met, which *resulted* in him being pushed into that form, I'm just as much at fault for what happened at the park, too."

Despite his reassurance, Sparx narrowed his eyes as he placed a hand on his chin. "I don't know..."

"C'mon on, guys," Classic said, looking at them sternly. "At least give him a chance. Don't you two remember our baseline and the number of baddies that eventually turned good?" he asked, turning to Hunter. "...Need I bring up Bianca?"

"That's different!" Hunter snapped, glaring down at Classic. "Bianca, she...she didn't realize what she was doing..."

"Kind of like how my counterpart didn't when I pushed him into that form," Classic interrupted with a smug smirk.

Hunter groaned and let out a sigh as he placed his hand to his head.

"Fine," he finally said in defeat before he looked back at Classic. "But if he goes psycho on us again and forces this loop to end early for us, don't come crying to me!"

Classic grinned before he turned back to look at Legend. Said dragon was still sitting in place, head moving around as he tried to understand his odd surroundings.

'Alright, then. Time to help my counterpart loosen up!' he thought, walking over to him. *'Should be pretty easy. If he really is my counterpart, then skateboarding should come natural to him!'*

The sound of a shrill scream could be heard as a purple dragon clinging onto a board with wheels like it was his lifeline went flying through the air. Legend's eyes were wide open as the ground approached fast. On instinct he opened his wings, but the speed with which he had been propelled off the ramp made straightening his descent almost impossible. Managing to slow himself down somewhat, he toppled over himself, landing chin first as he skidded across the ground. Body still standing up in the air as his head rested on the ground, Legend's expression went flat.

'Whoever came up with this accursed form of transportation needs to be thrown to Malefor's army...'

From atop the massive ramp the Classic trio had encouraged Legend to skate down, Sparx placed a hand on his chin.

"Ya' know, in hindsight," Sparx began, turning to Classic and Hunter, "maybe encouraging Spyro's counterpart, who's from an age where skateboards weren't even *invented* yet, to try to skate down the highest ramp in the park wasn't *necessarily* the best of ideas..."

"...You sure he's your counterpart?" Hunter asked, raising an eyebrow at Classic.

Classic sighed, shaking his head. "Okay, skateboarding is out of the question..." he muttered, watching as his counterpart got up and went to stomp down on the skateboard, only for it to wheel out from under him and cause him to fall flat on his back.

Classic's expression flattened. "Good thing I still have that healing spell..."

Classic shook his head. Hunter and Sparx were standing near the edge of the parking lot. They had decided to wait while he and his loop brother decided to take care of their loop mother's errands. Glancing over to Legend, he raised an eyebrow at how confused he looked.

Over the past couple of days, Legend had been bombarded with new experiences from all sides. Having a twin, playing video games, and trying to survive on a board with wheels, just to name a few. However, he hadn't fully grasped how different this world was from his own until Classic took him grocery shopping.

In his experience, Legend never saw the point of paying money for food. Why bother when you could go hunt down a deer and make dinner yourself? As the two purple dragons made their way to the marketplace, Legend chose not to voice his scepticism, electing to marvel at the pristine condition of the city around him. Amazed at the ornate architecture of the buildings, he couldn't help but cringe. Not at how overly done everything was, but at how Classic's loops apparently went. Whenever evil threatened Classic's world, it was always able to be caught and contained before it caused any more damage. Legend, on the other hand, had to clean up a mess that was a millennium in the making. It didn't help that he had to do so in three years, lest the planet be destroyed.

As Classic went over the list his mother had compiled, he detected his brother's distraught expression, "Hey, I know that you really suck at skateboarding, but it's nothing to get upset over."

Legend realized that his covet was showing and decided that bottling it up wouldn't end well, considering what happened the last time his temper spilled. "No, it's not that. Please, don't take this the wrong way, but I'm just angry at you."

"I wasn't trying to embarrass you, honest. I just thought—"

"It's not about skateboarding, OK? When I said that you treated everything like a game, I wasn't lying. All those adventures you told me about; those crises were averted because you existed to stop them. Me? I wasn't even born yet when Malefor brought the dragon civilization to its knees. No matter what loop I find myself in, I'm always at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and I just have to deal with it."

"You...you have the privilege to treat your situation lightly, because your base loop was full of happy endings. I *am* you, for Ancestors' sake! If my branch was created from your branch, why are we so different? Why can't I be as happy as you?" Finishing his despairing rant, Legend noticed the weird looks from bystanders, and both dragons picked their pace up considerably.

Once they were out of witnesses' sight, Classic tried to form some words of counsel for his brother. Even though this conversation eerily reminded him of Legend's psychotic rampage, he knew that things were different this time. No longer were they trying to tear each other down; this outburst was an earnest plea to the unseen powers that forced the two anchors and their fellow loopers on their unending odyssey across an infinite array of universes.

"I...can't answer that question. You have to ask Ihy about that. All I can do is help you be a kid again. That Malefor guy, he stole that from you, and I'm going to help you get it back."

With that said, the twins now stood in front of a large stone arch, the words "Lorefang Marketplace" inscribed on it. It was here that the dragons would be able to complete their mother's errand.

Legend sat silent for a bit, ruminating on Classic's ambition to restore his childhood, until the words he saw at the top of the arch registered in his mind. ' *Lorefang? That's sounds just like... No, that's impossible, this city couldn't be... Could it?'*

His brother proceeded to walk in until he realized that Legend was not following. "Hey, come on! You aren't gonna stand there all day, are ya?"

"No, of course not."

"Well?"

Classic tapped his claws impatiently and rolled his eyes when Legend finally stepped forward. "Look, I'm trying my best to help you. But eventually you'll have to get used to the idea of trying new things, otherwise you're never going to get out of the rut you've been thrown into over and over again."

"I know that, but you have to understa— *Oh my ancestors...* " Legend failed to finish his rebuttal when they entered the complex, leading him to lay eyes on the marvel encased within.

Creatures of all shapes and sizes promenaded throughout what could only be described as a crystalline masterpiece. Legend dared to look underneath the transparent floor and witnessed dragons and cheetahs, among other species, conducting commerce at booths and small stores built within the walls.

Classic simply whistled at what he considered to be the fanciest building he had ever been in. "You know, Artisans are known for their crafting skills, but this is just crazy."

"...Crazy is the perfect word for this. Who built this place, and why? Why would anyone spend this much effort building something like this, when all that was needed was a place to sell goods?"

"I don't know. I guess whoever built this place really liked glass. So, items on the list: beef, chicken, broth, fruits... " Classic deadpanned, seeing that his counterpart was still taking in his surroundings. "You have never seen anything like this, have you?"

Shaking his head, Legend tried to avoid getting distracted by the matrices of metal and glass that composed the interior of the building, but everywhere he looked, he found something new to gawk at. "I'm sorry, but, this is just too much. Could I just wait outside?"

"Of course you can't. You have to get used to this world, and if you can't get the freakin' groceries, then you're hopeless. Just stick with me and you'll be fine, I promise."

"Thank you, come again!"

Finished with the final transaction, Classic placed the last item on the list in his subspace pocket. He breathed a sigh of relief, glad that the job was done. Throughout their visit, Classic was embarrassed every time Legend asked the vendors a question, like: "You didn't hunt this down yourself? Why are you selling it, then?" Despite Legend's blunt display of his lack of social skills, he accepted that first-claw experience was the only way his brother was going to learn how to operate in this world.

A claw tapped on Classic's shoulder, and he turned to see Legend gesturing toward what looked to be a bookstore. The book-phobic dragon shook his head. "Look, I did enough reading to find those spells we need."

"I don't think you understand. Just come with me, alright?" A wide smile was worn on Legend's face, and Classic wondered what his brother was so excited about.

Out of curiosity, he dragged himself to the shop, and there stood a cut-out of a giant robot. Boldly written on the advertisement was: "Mazinger Z, Fighting Robot: New Issues in Stock!"

"Can we get a book about this? I just have to know more about this robot stuff!" Legend almost began to hop up and down due to the amount of hype he was experiencing.

"Well, considering that you are attracted to something that's cool for once, I'm all for it. I wouldn't expect you to be into robots, though. Didn't you come from the Middle Ages or something?"

Legend sheepishly pawed the floor as he tried to explain this. "Well, I was in this one loop where that same exact robot from the sign there took out this giant rock monster called 'The Destroyer'. Usually, me and Cynder had to defeat it, but that robot made everything so much easier. And then, I found out that a human was controlling it, and...well, I guess I like robots now."

Legend's twin tried to keep himself from chuckling, until he couldn't hold it in any longer. His face flushing red in embarrassment, Legend tried to salvage some of his dignity. "Hey, we both played that Dyson game, so you have no right to go and laugh at me."

"Heh, really? You're the one who tries to be mature and serious, and then you start wigging out over a robot comic like a complete fanboy! Fanboy, fanboy, fanboy!"

"I'm not a fanboy! ...Whatever that means!" Legend spat.

"Yes." Classic gasped to catch his breath after his bout of laughter. "You are a total fanboy and you won't admit it."

"Keep saying that and you'll regret it."

"Aw, come on, bro! You don't have to be so uptight about things. We're still going to get that comic you wanted, so don't get your tail in a knot. Fanboy."

Steaming at his brother's incessant name-calling, Legend had the urge to shut his mouth with a head-butt to the face. As Classic's chortles started to wind down, though, he slowly began to feel his rage give way to confusion and his scowl subsided. What was he so angry about? There was no reason to get upset. Despite Classic's inclination to be rather rude, he did have good intentions. Besides, Legend had dealt with this kind of behavior from his dragonfly

brother. Why couldn't he take this banter in good humor, like he did before the war?

'Come to think of it, I have been distant from Sparx ever since these loops. I haven't seen him for two days and I didn't even bat an eye!' Legend looked down, a frown on his face. *'...Did the war do this to me?'*

"Hey, don't get all quiet on me. It was just a joke."

Legend raised his head and a small smile emerged. "Yeah, I know. Thanks for getting me to realize that."

At this, Classic placed his paw behind his head, flattered at his twin's gratitude. "Dude, you don't have to thank me. We're brothers, right? A bro helps his bro. That's the way it works."

It was at this moment that Legend fully accepted his new family member. "Yeah. A bro helps his bro."

Ember tried to steady her nerves. She knew she had asked for this, but at the same time, it was a bit odd to get used to. She knew she couldn't put off learning to fight any longer, lest she be in greater danger in the next loops should something worse than a mugger pop up. Staring down a training dummy Cynder had borrowed from the local dojo, Ember took a deep breath. She—rather awkwardly—hunched down in the position Cynder had taught her as she readied her nerves.

Cynder watched from the sidelines with an indifferent expression. Luckily, this loop version of herself had been training at the dojo for a while now before she blinked awake. This made getting the dummy a cinch, but trying to sign Ember up for a class proved difficult, thanks in part to their loop mother.

"I... Do you really think this is necessary?" Edna asked her daughter, looking down at Cynder.

Cynder shook her head. "You won't let her join at the temple to learn this stuff, even though she asked about it."

"Well, it's just..." Edna said, glancing at Ember with an apprehensive face. "Maybe this is a bit of an overreaction?"

Cynder shook her head. From what her loop memories told her, their mother was the overprotective type. It had apparently taken her a full year to let her pre-awake self take up self-defence classes because she didn't want to see her get hurt in a sparring match, and that was only because she had proven herself to be fully committed to it. Nonetheless, Cynder shook her head at the comment.

"She was almost mugged. If I wasn't there, things could have been a lot worse," Cynder said flatly, her eyes still focused on Ember. "She has the right to learn how to defend herself."

Edna bit her lip. Cynder had always had a habit of being smarter than her age would suggest. That was part of the reason she had let Cynder join the local dojo in the first place. Still, it was hard to picture Ember in a setting like that. Ember had always be fairly naive and innocent. The idea of her getting flung around during a practice match gone wrong terrified her greatly. She didn't want to see her get hurt.

Cynder shook her head. Ignoring her loop mother, she walked over to Ember and placed a paw on her shoulder.

"You almost got the basic combat position down. There's still a few things that are off, though," she said, gently shifting Ember into the correct position.

Despite not exactly being big on the idea of Ember learning how to fight, Edna couldn't help but smile. If nothing else, it was nice to see her big sister looking out for her.

Sunset was nigh, and Classic continued to rack his brain over the inert pieces of metal on his desk. How simple it was to take advantage of its weak security measures, but the arcane structure of the armor was now corrupted as a result of forcefully stopping the adhesive process.

'I'm so lucky that I didn't touch anything else, otherwise I would've had to wipe the entire artifact and start with a clean slate. ' With a sigh, Classic allowed his magic sense to overlay his vision and placed his paw on the armor. With a muted buzz, the protective gear projected scores of luminescent symbols onto a clear space on the wall, until it presented an understandable prompt:

"GoldArmor-magicArtifact

Welcome back, enter a command:

[#!]_"

'Huh, I only have to log in once? Did anyone take a look at this and consider that maybe, just maybe, that was a bad design decision?' Classic chose to push this thought from his mind. He needed to focus on the task at hand. His eyes fixated on the wall and he thought out his instructions to the magical command line.

"[#!]find corrupted enchantments

Found 1, Adhesive. emt

[#!]remove Adhesive. emt

Removed successfully.

[#!]run EnchantmentStudio. emt

[!]A new update is available, install? Yes or No?

[#!]No

Welcome to Enchantment Studio v1.5. For help, think "manual" or "support"

[#!]create new enchantment

Name of Enchantment?

[#!]StickyArmor. emt

Names of Tomes?

[#!]Glue. tome

Names of Spells?

[#!]Attraction. spell

[#!]Subj_"

Classic stopped writing; the underscore dangled at the end of the unfinished word. The vaporous, cyan clouds that veiled his eyes bubbled and frothed, as if they were protesting Classic's hasty decision to rewrite a corrupted enchantment himself.

On the other side of the bedroom, Legend was engrossed in the mecha manga that he had obtained from the bookstore. He was quite familiar with books, having assisted the Chronicler when they were trying to find out why the loops were happening. However, he had never encountered books that combined prose and illustration so seamlessly. It was as if the two media united in a harmonious waltz, causing the story to increase tenfold in its immersion.

'So, Koji is Dr. Kabuto's grandson, and all this tragedy happened over some scientific discovery? That's so sad...' Unfortunately, before Legend could keep reading, a muffled curse resounded from Classic, and then a question was asked loud enough for Legend to hear.

"What am I getting myself into?"

Legends stirred at the question and turned his head to see what his brother was doing. He blinked as he noticed Classic had a set of gold armor like he did. Come to think of it, what had happened to his armor after the fight? He hadn't exactly been in a state of mind to grab it.

"Since when do you have that kind of armor?" he asked in a surprised tone.

Classic jumped, harboring guilt over the fact that he was trying to fix his brother's armor when he barely knew how to write an enchantment. Then he chuckled bitterly. "It's your stuff. I kinda grabbed it after you beat it out of the park. During...that, I kinda sorta messed with your armor, thinking it would get me the win. Afterwards, I thought that I'd fix 'em up as my way of saying 'I'm sorry,'" Classic explained. Then he shook his head. "But well, it doesn't want to work with me."

Intrigued, Legend set his comic aside and cautiously started treading across the room. "How did you mess with my armor? I don't remember you doing anything to it."

"I kinda yanked off some of the pieces in a way you're not supposed to," Classic replied, embarrassed.

Legend's response held a veiled knife. "When?"

"About the time with the egg," Classic said vaguely. He wasn't giving their mother any more ammunition if she were listening in.

"Well, that explains a few things," Legends said dryly. "I was wondering what you were doing just staring at me."

They had both accepted that their fight was an act of foolishness from both parties, and if they hadn't been so abrasive toward each other, the two dragons wouldn't have had to set up a web of lies to cover their tracks. Knowing that they both had probably discussed

that particular event far more than they would like in this Loop, Legend moved into safer waters. "So what's the problem?"

Classic shrugged. "No clue. At the end of the day, magic is somewhere between an art form and a science. I can magic up a desired result about eighty percent of the time, but the remaining twenty... Well, see for yourself."

"Can I see for myself?"

A bit of sweat ran down Classic's neck, but he kept his voice level. "What do you mean by that?"

"Could I see how you're fixing my armor? I'd like to know more about magic so I can use that teleport spell you promised me."

The pint-sized magician weighed his options. He could make his command line visible to Legend, as long as his brother didn't know anything about magic. Besides, the magic command prompt probably wasn't invented in Legend's time, so what did he have to worry about?

"Fine then. Don't ask me any questions, though. I have to focus on this."

With that, Classic revealed the translucent projection that transcribed the interactions between himself and the armor. The vapor that surrounded his eyes also became visible to Legend, whose mouth hung open in awe.

In a whisper, Legend finally reacted to the sight before him. "...That's what you were doing during the fight?"

"Yep. That's the same reaction I had when I saw this for the first time. To think, all this stuff is what's actually going on when you're waving a wand around. It's a lot of hard work to write an enchantment of your own, and it often doesn't work the first time. But

when it finally does what it's supposed to, I've heard that it gives you the most satisfying feeling in the world."

"I can imagine..." As he tried to comprehend the scores of messages that apparently rattled around in his armor, Legend continued. "Will I have to learn this, too?"

"Fortunately for the both of us, no. I guess you could consider this 'advanced' magic; it's extremely powerful stuff if you know what you're doing and how to do it." Classic kept transmitting his commands to the armor, hoping that Legend wouldn't catch on to his lack of expertise. "If you only need to use a spell, you can get away with magical calligraphy."

"And what's that?"

"Well, I never liked it, but it's basically magic for dummies. If you know how to draw a triangle, then you should be fine. With that said, it's sometimes finicky and the novelty wears off. Quickly."

"So, wait. Everyone can use magic?"

"Yes and no. Yes, magic is just a part of life in my world. Every dragon is able to use it to a small extent. But no, if you really want to do cool stuff with it, then you have to dedicate a lot of time to learn and practice it, which is something that people either don't have or they just don't see the point."

At this, Legend felt that there was a similarity between his study of elements and Classic's study of magic. Whenever he frequented Warfang, Legend always thought that it was a disturbing trend that the civilians only knew the most basic elemental techniques. As he listened to Classic's lecture, however, he came to the conclusion that the unfortunate denizens of the city had no time or privilege to study with the Guardians like he did. Either they were fighting against the siege, or they were sleeping with one eye open.

'Then that means, the next time I find myself in a base loop, I have to do my best to share what I learned. Otherwise, we'll always spend the whole loop fighting Malefor.'

"Alright, I understand. So, when do we start?"

Classic raised a glance to his brother and spoke in softer volume. "Start what? Teaching you? It depends, really. We're both a bit young to be magicians, and we might get some suspicion from our parents and the police, considering everything that's happened so far. If you want to start now, we have to find a safer place to do it, don't you think?"

Conceding to this, Legend sighed. "Yes, that's true."

Even though Classic's reasoning was sound, Legend had a small suspicion that he was trying to hide something. Whatever it was, it could wait. He had a previous engagement to attend to, and reading about a dragon and his super fighting mecha was rather compelling.

As he climbed back onto the bed, Legend retrieved his comic book and resumed the story. Classic's tension subsided in response to this, and he returned his attention to the armor.

'I can figure it out myself,' he thought. *'If I know how to work a command line, I don't have to get scared about writing my own spells... Right?'*

Today was a day for answers. After eating their breakfast, the two purple dragons made their way to an apartment in the uptown of Lorefang, ready to confront the equivalent of a god. Thanks to Classic's parental manipulation skills, the Spyros were once again allowed to leave the house, and Ihy would now have to answer for the repeated tribulations that Legend endured as a result of the loops.

Legend stopped at the door, his claw faltering. This Ihy character probably wouldn't care, if his previous behavior was any indicator. Would a drunkard really consider altering his history so that he and his fellow loopers could lead a more peaceful life?

"Are you going to knock? What's wrong?" Classic asked.

"Please don't rush me, I just need to gather myself for a moment."

The more mature of the pair steadied himself and, after what felt like an hour, finally brought his clenched paw down upon the door. However, Legend's attempt to strike the door was foiled when it opened to reveal a dragon who reeked of alcohol. Both dragons jumped back at this, and the drunkard admin breathed out a sigh of derision and headache.

"Are you seriously surprised that an Admin would expect you?"

Classic stepped forward to answer, but he was interrupted by Ihy. "You know what? Don't answer. Just come inside and don't touch anything, got it?"

With that, the anchors were led into the apartment, where Legend Sparx and Hunter also resided. The cheetah appeared to have woken up recently and just started making breakfast for himself, while the dragonfly sat on the bar that separated the kitchen from the living room, watching the television.

Legend stared at his brother, stopping in the main corridor. So far, Sparx seemed to be doing fine without him, and he felt a pang of guilt for leaving the dragonfly in the dust over the course of the loops. Before he could continue in his remorse, he was once again called back into reality.

"Hey, bro! Keep up with us, alright?" Classic called.

Sparx flew toward Classic and kept pace with him, not realizing that he was not the one being addressed. "Spyro, I haven't seen you

most of this loop! Did you get to see all the cool stuff this world has? It's amazing; why don't we have this stuff in our loops? You know, I gotta ask Ihy abou—"

Legend grew a bit annoyed at Sparx's tangent and stopped him before he could finish. "Sparx, he was talking to me. By the way, you're talking to the wrong Spyro."

"...Oh, sorry. You know, we really need to come up with something, like code names for you two." Sparx flew toward the correct Spyro and resumed his one-sided conversation. "So I was saying, I gotta ask Ihy about putting this stuff in our loops, wouldn't that be cool?"

"Actually, I have something really important to ask him. If you want, you can sit with us while we're discussing this, OK?"

"Alright. Could you ask him to put TV in our loop? I asked him a few times, but he's a huge stickler about it..."

As Sparx ran his mouth, Legend rediscovered one of the reasons why he'd blocked Sparx out during the loops. To be frank, his adopted brother was funny sometimes, but he was annoying much of the time. Having to put up with it during a perpetual war did not help. The dragon caught up to his twin, and it was then that Legend heard a rare gem in Sparx's ramblings.

"...Spy and Ro!"

Both dragons perked up and tilted their heads in response.

"What?" they said in unison.

"Yeah, he's Spy, since he's like a copy of you," Sparx gestured to Classic as he said so. "And you're Ro, because you're my bro. Cool, right?"

Classic and Legend felt a bit apprehensive at the butchering of their matching names and almost expressed their disapproval, until Ihy

grew impatient.

"Are you here to talk to me or what? I should be sitting on a sofa, living it up after making this whole damned universe, but now I'm playing school counselor for a couple of whelps," Ihy grumbled from behind his desk, apparently fighting a hangover.

The admin's tone rubbed Legend the wrong way, and he finally let Ihy know exactly what he thought of this looping business. "What a great attitude for someone who is supposed to take care of our loops. Yes, I am going to talk to you, and you're going to listen and understand exactly what I'm going through!"

Ihy looked toward Legend with a unimpressed expression, while Classic and Sparx stood silent with the knowledge that their brother was restricting his rising urge to chuck the drunkard straight out the window.

"I have served in war for a total of three thousand, six hundred and forty five years. Yes, I have been counting. I keep playing my part in this perpetual circus of yours, hoping that someday, I'll finally be able to put this all behind me and live my life in peace. My brother, on the other paw—"

Ihy and Sparx raised their eyebrows as Legend raised a pointed claw at Classic.

"Your brother?" they parroted.

"My brother lives a life of luxury, compared to me. Every time evil threatens his world, it can be stopped before it festers and grows. But what about me? I was born into a broken world, and there's no way for me to end things before they begin. I have to spend five years fighting in a war that refuses to end until the loop finally comes to a close. If you're in charge of these loops, then why do you let us suffer like this? Cynder and I, we defied *death* to save our world, and it was all in vain because you decided that it would be funny to keep

throwing us back to the very beginning until we lose our sanity! Is that what you want? Is it?!"

In his slurred thoughts, Ihy felt a slight empathy toward the frustrated anchor before him, but he also took great offense to what Legend had just insinuated. "You think I'm a sadist? Of course I don't want to see you or your friends go batshit! It's just that..."

"That what? You said you made this world. Can't you do us a favor and do something like that for my loops too? Better yet, can we just stay in this loop?"

"...I was going to say, it's complicated. I had to get permission from the higher-ups to get this whole loop set up for you two. What do you think they'll say if I try to do this favor for you? What if everybody got to make their perfect little paradises whenever they wanted? What'll happen to Yggdrasil if we strain it with more and more universes? What fucking then?"

The entire apartment fell under a blanket of silence. The anger that Legend harbored began to subside, and Ihy resumed speaking. "Look, I know that your baseline sucks. If it didn't threaten the World Tree, I would be more than happy to help you out. But the situation remains that you have to tough it out."

Legend's head hung low. "Is that it, then? There's nothing you can do to help me and my friends?"

The admin tapped a claw on the desk. Looking at the monitor beside him, he managed to come up with an idea. "I can help you, but for the good of Yggdrasil, I shouldn't. However, that doesn't mean that you can't help yourself."

With that, he made a request for logs of Legend's activities during the loop. A few seconds later, a lengthy array of records spread across the screen and Ihy turned the monitor toward the two anchors. "This is your log. It recorded all your activities since you started looping."

The two purple dragons as well as the dragonfly gawked in disbelief. With a shaky voice, Legend stuttered, "You've been watching us the whole time?"

"You could say that Yggdrasil keeps track of everybody. Do me a favor and tell me what you notice as I scroll through your records."

Before Legend's eyes, his never-ending story was recounted in sterile, mechanical language. He read the first loop. All the events that the log accounted for were extremely familiar, in spite of the register's broken, note-like syntax. Ihy scrolled on, the next loop appearing on the screen. Speed-reading through the next section, Legend didn't find any new details. More loops were presented, and he noticed nearly no difference between one loop and the next, excluding the scarce variant loops, of course. At the thirtieth loop, Ihy stopped scrolling and asked Legend to make an observation.

"So, did you notice anything?"

"There...wasn't much to notice. The loops were so similar that I could barely find anything noteworthy."

"Exactly. And from what I can tell, you reacted to all of these events the same way. Every single loop, it was the same routine for you. Save the Guardians, free Cynder, fight a war for three years or so, and kick Malefor's ass. Rinse and repeat."

"Are you saying that I shouldn't strive to save my world every loop? How would that help?"

"No, not exactly. In fact, doing the same thing for a majority of your loops made it pretty easy for us to make repairs on your branch, and on others. Thanks, by the way. But if you want to increase the chance that you will find yourself in a loop other than your base loop, then you need to add variables."

"Variables?"

"Variables. By letting certain events happen or preventing them, you are presenting new variables to Yggdrasil. When Yggdrasil has more variables to handle, it compensates by creating variant loops. Basically, if you keep changing the decisions that you make on each loop, there'll be a greater chance that on the next loop, you'll find yourself in a different universe."

At this, Classic remembered what he'd told Legend before they entered the market. "See, I told you. Try new things and good things will happen."

Ihy begged to differ, however. "Wrong. Try new things and different things will happen, not good things necessarily."

Legend began to fret over the implications of Ihy's explanation. "What do you mean by 'not good things'?"

"Good question. For one thing, you could loop in as a different person, which is incredibly trippy in most cases."

Recalling the strange loop where he'd played the part of Ignitus, Legend shuddered.

"Even worse, you could end up in a loop where everything that can go wrong *will* go wrong. These unstable loops also have a nasty habit of crashing due to their hostility toward the anchors that house them."

It was here that Sparx finally spoke up. "And by hostile, you mean...?" He wheeled his arms, signaling Ihy to finish the sentence.

"You could all die. Very quickly."

Once again, no words were heard from the group.

"That said, you could also have a ton of fun in a variant. Really, it's a gamble with the best fucking prizes and the shittiest penalties. In the

end, it's your choice and it's your life. Do what you want, and as long as you don't fuck Yggdrasil up, you're fine."

The Spyros and Sparx processed this bombardment of information and advice, while Hunter walked in from the kitchen to add his two cents to the conversation. "So I haven't been listening the entire time, but I think I know what you're sayin'. The best we can do is to just do our best, right?"

"If that's how you want to see it," was Ihy's ambiguous response.

Finally, Sparx decided that he'd had enough of this Ihy guy and his unclear counsel. "Geez, aren't you a big help. Come on, Spy and Ro, let's just leave. This guy's a complete hack."

Both purple dragons opened their mouths to reprimand Sparx for his new naming convention, but Hunter started to speak before they could make their disapproval known. "This Sparx knows what he's talking about. Right, um... Hey, other Sparx, what did you call my Spyro again?"

'Oh great, it's spreading...' thought Classic. He would have told Legend Sparx exactly what he and his counterpart thought of this 'Spy and Ro' thing, but he declined. It would pass eventually. Hopefully.

Legend, on the other paw, decided to express some gratitude to the admin. "Um, thank you for your advice. I'm sorry for yelling at you like that."

"It's nothing, really. Besides, I've taken a lot worse from the other admins. Now, if you want to do me a favor, leave. I'm currently busy with something."

So, it was decided. The four loopers exited the apartment and made their plans for the rest of the day, leaving Ihy to drown himself away on more beer and television. As they walked down the stairs, Legend debated his options. Would he introduce new variables for the

chance that he and his friends could avoid the base loop more often, or would he follow the course for predictability and the good of Yggrasil?

Early in the morning, Cynder stood in the living room staring at a note. She narrowed her eyes at what was written on it.

'Dear Cynder,

Ember and I are going out grocery shopping today, and I'm leaving you in charge of the house. There should be some cans of soup in the kitchen if you get hungry.

Love, your mother.'

Getting the sneaking suspicion that this had to do with their loop mother not wanting Ember to learn how to fight, Cynder sighed. There wasn't much she could really do about it for the moment. The best she could do was wait for them to return and, provided they didn't take all day, she would resume training her sister then.

It was then that there was a knock on the door. Raising an eyebrow, Cynder went over and cautiously opened it. Buzzing in front of the open doorframe was a gold sparkling dragonfly. She was about to narrow her eyes at why Sparx had decided to bug her today, but once she got a good look at the dragonfly, she tilted her head.

"Wait... You're that other Sparx."

"Yep. 'Classic' Sparx, the non-wimpy Sparx, the Sparx who doesn't look like he spent too much time around a radioactive waste dump, I'm willing to go with any of those," Classic Sparx said, an amused smile on his face.

Cynder blinked. "Why are you here?"

"Well, hi to you too."

Cynder's expression went flat, causing Classic Sparx to smirk.

"My Spyro is busy hanging out with your Spyro, my counterpart is avoiding me like the plague, and I have no idea what Hunter's up to, so I figured I'd see what you and Ember are up to," Sparx said, glancing back into the house. "...Where is everyone, anyway?"

"They went out doing something called 'grocery shopping'," Cynder said flatly. "Or rather, 'Mom' dragged Ember out to keep her away from me teaching her how to defend herself."

"Ember's trying to learn how to fight?" Sparx asked, raising an eyebrow. "Geez, that must be one heck of an uphill battle."

Cynder narrowed her eyes. This Sparx may have looked different, but he was beginning to sound a lot like the Sparx she knew all too well. "I'll have you know she's coming along quite nicely. The fact that our loop mother is trying at all cost to prevent it is beside the point."

"Yeah, yeah," Sparx said, rolling his eyes. "I was just teasing. Don't have to take it so personally."

Cynder kept a sharp glare on the dragonfly, but Sparx simply chuckled. With a smirk, he began to fly into the building.

"Well, I don't have anything else better to do at the moment. Mind if I hang out here for a bit?" he asked, glancing around at the living room with a whistle.

"Hold on now, I don't think I'm allowed to have anyone over," Cynder said, quickly following after Sparx with a scowl.

"Ah, relax. I'm a tiny dragonfly. What does your mother have to worry about? Me stealing lint?" Sparx asked, smirking as he rested on one of the arm chairs of the couch in the middle of the living room.

Cynder let out a groan. It was official. This Sparx may look different, but he was more or less the Sparx she knew nonetheless. She was just about to demand him to leave when a low gurgling sound escaped from her stomach. With flushing cheeks, she glanced down. Realizing she had yet to have breakfast, she glanced over to the kitchen. From what she could tell, food was much easier to come by in this world than it was in her own, which was good. However, from what she'd observed from her loop mother, it involved a lot more preparation. She paused.

'...It can't be that *hard... Can it?'* Remembering the note her loop mother had left that said something about 'cans of soup', whatever those were, she headed over to the kitchen.

As Cynder entered through the door, she paused and took a look around. Cabinets were hung about everywhere and that odd storage container that kept food fresh for longer sat in the corner. Narrowing her eyes, she glanced around.

"Need some help?"

Cynder jumped, spinning around to see Sparx floating in the air. She narrowed her eyes.

"I'm perfectly capable of feeding myself. I do not need any help," Cynder said flatly before turning back to her surroundings.

Pausing, she took a few minutes to figure out where the food was most commonly kept. She walked over to the 'refrigerator' and opened the door, to be hit with a rush of cold air. Staggering back, she took a defensive stance as she eyed the opened door carefully. Hearing Sparx chuckling in the background, she glared at him.

Sparx looked on with an amused expression. "Careful now. Those refrigerators are wily ones."

Expression going flat, Cynder turned back to the refrigerator. Cautiously walking up to it, she looked around at the contents. She

raised an eyebrow. From what she could see, mostly boxes and vegetables were kept in there. She had no idea why a dragon would eat vegetables, but considering the odd diets of the dragons of this world, she didn't dwell on the subject for long.

It was then she noticed a package of raw meat. It would be good back-up in case she couldn't figure out where this 'soup can' was, but considering her loop mother wanted her to get the soup first, and this Sparx was teasing about her lack of knowledge of how food was stored in this loop, she wanted to prove that she could figure this out on her own.

"Teasing aside, exactly what are you looking for?" Sparx asked, flying over next to Cynder.

Cynder glanced over flatly. "A soup can."

"Oh," Sparx said, crossing his arms and rolling his eyes. "Well, you know, them soup cans are so hard to find, what with them being non-refrigerated."

Cynder narrowed her eyes. Closing the refrigerator door, she went over to the cabinets where food was also kept. Glancing around the interior, she came across a small can with the words 'chicken soup' on it. Pulling it out, she raised an eyebrow.

"What's the matter? Don't you have cans in your world?" Sparx asked, a slight smirk on his face.

Cynder groaned, a scowl on her face. Rolling his eyes, Sparx floated over to her.

"Word of advice, the food is *in* the can."

Cynder glared at him before placing the can on the table. Eyeing it warily, she placed her paw on it and attempted to rip off the top. When it refused to budge, Cynder picked it up and attempted to tear the can in two, growling as a scowl planted itself firmly on her face.

After several seconds of this, she gave up to take a moment to catch her breath. Hearing Sparx chuckling in the background, she groaned.

"Pro-tip: try using a can opener," Sparx suggested, making sure to fly up out of range of any retaliation the dragoness below him could dish out.

Cynder blinked. She wasn't entirely sure what a 'can opener' was, so she brushed the comment off. Setting the can on the table, she glared at it. There had to be *some* way to open this thing. Glancing backwards, she noted the blade at the tip of her tail. Glaring back at the soup can, she swung her tail forward and pierced the blade through the middle of the can. Turning it sideways so the content didn't go spilling out, she pulled her tailblade free.

"Dang. Never saw someone who *was* a can opener before."

"You know, for someone who gets annoyed by our Sparx's mouth, you have quite an annoying one on you as well," Cynder finally said, glaring over towards Classic Sparx.

Sparx held his hands out in front of him. "Alright, alright, I'll stop. I was just teasing, is all."

Cynder shook her head. Turning back to the can, she picked it up and was about to drink its contents from the hole she'd made. Just before she did, though, Sparx flew in front of her.

"Whoah, hold up there!" Sparx said, getting in front of her and the can. "You can't just eat this stuff cold!"

Cynder narrowed her eyes. "And why not?"

"Because it's unhealthy! That's why!" Sparx sighed. "Listen, just get a bowl. I'll walk you through this."

Cynder groaned, setting the can down and getting a bowl. As she set the bowl down, Sparx nodded as she took the can and poured the soup into it.

"Tell me, uh..."

"Cynder."

"Yeah, Cynder, right," Sparx said, scratching the back of his head. "Have you ever cooked something before?"

"No," Cynder said, looking down at the bowl of soup. "Most of the stuff I tend to eat is either raw or doesn't need to be cooked."

"Yeesh. How in the realms do you not get sick on a regular basis, then?"

Cynder raised her head and looked at the dragonfly. "I'm pretty sure we can chalk that up to dragons from my world being different from yours. I'd think that'd be rather apparent, considering everything you've seen so far," she said flatly. "By the way, why do you ask?"

"Just wondering if I should have the fire department on hand," Sparx said, a cheeky grin on his face.

Cynder's expression flattened as she glared at Sparx before she turned back to her food. She needed to somehow cook this thing, though she doubted her loop mother would approve of starting a fire in the house. As several seconds passed, Sparx flew down next to her.

"Here's an idea. Why not use the microwave?"

"The wha—?"

Sparx shook his head before pointing to the odd silver-ish box thing that was sitting on the counter. Cynder blinked at the odd contraption before looking back at the bowl of soup. After several seconds passed, she picked the bowl up and headed over to the counter top.

Setting the bowl down, she eyed the odd device, tapping on the glass covering.

"The food goes inside. Just saying."

"I figured that," Cynder said flatly. "I can figure this out on my own, thank you very much."

"Fine, fine. Excuse me for trying to help."

Cynder shook her head before looking back at the silver-ish box. *'Come on, Cynder. You've survived being mind-controlled for several loops, fought your way through hordes of the Dark Master's minions, and figured out the Destroyer's weakness. Surely you can figure out how to use this micro...whatever...thing.'*

Cynder narrowed her eyes. The first challenge would be figuring out how to open the blasted thing. She could tell the glass in front was a door of some sort, but there wasn't any handle readily apparent. Raising her paw up, she put one of her claws in the slit around the door. Tugging with all her might, she nearly pulled the microwave off the table as she struggled to rebalance herself. Catching herself and putting the microwave back into a more stable position, she placed one of her paws to brace against the microwave to make sure it wouldn't fall.

Several seconds passed as she struggled against the door. Despite her many, *many* years of fighting in a war and coming out on top against all odds, she had never come across something as stubborn as the door to this microwave. Taking a few seconds to catch her breath, she heard Sparx clear his throat. Glancing over, she noted Sparx was eyeing the buttons next to the door. Pausing, Cynder eyed the buttons curiously. It didn't take a genius to figure out one of these supposedly opened the door. *Which one* , however, was a different story...

Cynder raised her paw, one of her claws hovering in front of 'defrost'. Sparx cleared his throat again. Taking that as a hint, Cynder lowered

her paw to the 'popcorn' setting. Hearing another cleared throat, Cynder lowered her paw towards the biggest button at the very bottom. Hearing nothing from Sparx, Cynder smirked as she pressed the button.

The smirk was quickly wiped from her face as the door flung open and smacked her in the muzzle.

Frowning as she rubbed her sore snout, she held the door open and lowered her head to pick up the bowl of soup in her mouth. Placing it in the microwave, she closed the door. Smirking at her small victory, she paused. It was only then that she realized she had absolutely no idea what to do next.

Realizing from her earlier experience with the door that it was the buttons that worked this contraption, she raised her claw. Unsure of what to do next, she pressed one of the buttons at random. As the microwave admitted a loud beep, Cynder staggered back, eyes wide as she raised her wings in surprise.

Sparx raised his hand in front of his mouth, trying his best to suppress his growing giggles. "Relax. It's not going to eat you or anything."

Cynder glared at him before cautiously heading back towards the microwave. Raising her paw again, she began to press buttons at random, flinching every time it beeped. Finally, the microwave began to admit a whirring sound as the bowl of soup inside it began to spin and the inners lit up. Cynder paused, glancing over to Sparx. The dragonfly had a smirk on his face as he held a thumb up.

Cynder smiled at her victory. Maybe she was starting to get the hang of this, after all...

"...I didn't even know soup *could* catch fire!" Sparx exclaimed, eyes wide as he kept a good ways away from the chaos going on.

Cynder growled, using her wind element to hopefully smother the flames inside the device. Defying all logic, the top of the bowl of soup was covered in flames. Cynder's left eye twitched. She growled before she ran over to a window and opened it. Rushing back to the raging flames inside the machine, she grabbed the bowl and tossed it out the window.

Panting heavily, she sighed as she lowered her head. Sparx cautiously headed over to her, eyes wide. "...I'm beginning to see why you never cooked before."

Cynder groaned, giving Sparx the coldest glare he had ever seen.

(O hai, fanfiction. Been a while since this was updated. Sorry it took so long, but hey, now we're back in business.

Anyways, looks like something amiss is afoot. I'm a bit worried that the upcoming final quarter of this arc might be a bit *out there* for some. It has to do with Infinite Loop 'lore' as a whole, and some original loop characters that are the closest thing to 'bad' there is in the loops. It'll make sense when it's explained, but... I don't know.

Anyways, this arc is seriously going on longer than intended. It was originally suppose to be just a way the characters could meet and adjust to one another, and currently there are *five more chapters and counting* to this arc waiting in the wings. Somehow it became a full fledged story in and of itself. I'm *seriously* considering posting some 'intermission' chapters that fall more into the loop shenanigans of the first few chapters sense I've gotten quite a few people asking when that's going to start up again.

On top of that, there have a been a few misc. snips posted to the thread on Sufficient Velocity and it's starting to pile up a bit there, and I'm getting the feeling that the others helping work on

this arc are starting to get a bit tired of working on just it too so... I don't know. I feel like it would be for the best though.

Anyways, remember to leave a review because it helps us greatly, and give your opinions on the possibility of 'intermission' chapters. I think I have an idea of how to handle this so there's a way to difference between arc chapters and loop shenanigan chapters...)

Filler-y Shenanigans

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx.)

(A/N: Hey everyone. I don't normally put my A/N at the start of a chapter as I feel like it takes away from the chapter itself, but I felt this needed some explaining. I've gotten several people asking me when the snip based shenanigans would start again, and recently we've had to rewrite the chapter we intended to post next for this current arc because our beta-reader pointed out that it felt a tad bit rushed. As such, rather than putting this on hiatus while we're rewriting it, I decided to try out a 'filler' chapter that falls back into the usual snip based shenanigans of old.

A rule shared by authors in the Infinite Loops community is that snips don't necessarily have to take place in sequential order. A few of this snips *do* take place after the current arc, but don't spoil too much of it, so I feel they're okay to post now without needing any further context for them. Also trying something new with the formatting with the snips. However, I feel like I've already rambled far too much for an A/N at the start, so further comments at the end like always.)

Classic Loop 2.8

The smell of burning rubber and mushrooms was thick in the air as karts whizzed by at blistering speeds. Spyro smirked. Out of all the fused loops he'd had so far, it wasn't the most relaxing one, but it was definitely the most *fun.* Driving a kart was nothing new to him. There were a few times he'd joined in Crash's world for kart tournaments. Driving anti-gravity karts on some sort of techno rave course, however...

Sparx held on for dear life, clutching one of the frills atop Spyro's head. Spyro smirked as he came up to an anti-gravity portion of the track, his purple kart hopping slightly as the anti-grav function of his kart kicked in. Punching the gas, Spyro came up upon one of those odd small pillar things. Brushing the side of it, his kart spun around delicately as he got a mini-boost. Spyro grinned, the little hub in the middle of his steering wheel showing that he was in first place.

"We should totally think about setting one of these things up in our world, Sparx! This is awesome!" Spyro said, adrenalin pumping as he kept an eye on the road.

Sparx, who was currently holding a hand in front of his mouth and turning paler by the second, could barely glance down at his friend. "Uh, yeah. Lets not. At the risk of sounding like that wimpy Sparx, I'm getting seriously sick here!"

Spyro glanced back slightly at Sparx. "Well, you didn't have to come with me, ya know."

"What? And let you get turned into road kill?" Sparx said, managing to force a smirk.

Spyro grinned. "Aw c'mon, Sparx. Don't you trust me enough? It's just kart racing. It's not like— *GAH!* "

Spyro swerved his kart, barely avoiding being smacked by a green shell. "That proves nothing!"

Sparx rolled his eyes as Spyro got his kart back on track. Before he realized what was going on, an Italian mustachioed man clad in red and riding a bike came racing past. Spyro narrowed his eyes, punching the gas as he began to catch up. He smirked.

"You know, for a plumber, you certainly have a wide range of other skills under your belt!" Spyro said, pulling up to the plumber.

Mario looked back, a grin on his face.

"Isn't going to stop me from winning, though!" Spyro taunted, noticing a few item boxes in the distance.

Mario gave a determined smirk, giving a fist pump.

"...You know, I didn't realize it until now, but you don't talk much, do you?"

Mario shook his head in response.

Spyro tried his best to suppress an urge to continue his taunting as he came upon the item boxes. Holding back for a bit, he waited until the item wheel on his HUD stopped spinning before a red shell appeared in his claws. Spyro grinned.

"Well, Mario, as much as I'm enjoying this semi-one-sided conversation, I have a race to win!"

Mario looked back, his eyes wide as he was smacked with the red shell, his kart spinning out as Spyro blazed past. Spyro smirked as he saw the finish line not far off. "Aw yeah! Sorry, all you loop natives! But it looks like this purple dragon has just—!"

'What's that whooshing sound?'

Spyro looked up, eyes wide in horror as a blue shell smacked into him from above.

"Reversed Roles" pt 1: Legend Loop 2.9 (feat: AbZHz101)

Spyro awoke to find himself back in the familiar swamp. Looking himself over and finding that he was still a purple dragon, Spyro prepared to follow his normal routine of getting ready for the day before sneaking out of the swamp to help Cynder. Those plans were brought to a screeching halt when he noticed that his armor was

placed carefully, almost reverently, on a nearby tree to keep the pieces from becoming damaged.

Spyro knew that all three sets of his normal armor were in his subspace, which meant that these had to have been collected in-loop. However, before he could truly focus on that, he heard a familiar voice call out. "Spyro!"

Spyro turned to see Cynder loping toward him.

"What are you spacing out for?" she asked as she stopped beside him. "Dad told me that there are soldiers in the area. We've got to move soon."

When Cynder said the word 'Dad', Spyro's loop memories supplied him with an image of the last dragon he wanted to be in a five-mile radius of at any given time, much less have a familial bond with.

"Could you give me about ten minutes, Cynder, please?" he asked her. "I just need to get my head together."

"You're not sick, are you?" Cynder gasped. "Oh man, I knew we shouldn't have come here. Why is it you two like this place? You always end up sick or hurt when we come here and yet you insist that we come back!"

"Cynder!" Spyro snapped, his voice coming out tighter and louder than he had intended. Taking a calming breath, he continued more calmly. "I'm fine, Cynder. I just need to straighten some things up is all."

"Alright," Cynder conceded. "But don't take too long, we'll be cutting it close as it is. Got it, little brother?"

Spyro stared for a moment as Cynder sauntered away. Then, collecting himself enough to pull something out of his subspace, he retrieved his personal copy of *All about Looping* and flipped to Chapter Eight: High-Variance Loops. Thankfully there was a bulleted

section summarizing everything at the very beginning to act as refresher for loopers in need of advice and stretched for time. Instantly his eyes flicked to the fifth bullet, which someone had replaced with a star at some point.

"If you suspect that you are in a High-Variance Loop, please review all of your in-loop memories. If the world is acceptable to your expectations, treat as a normal. If the loop seems to not be acceptable, please subvert the loop **in a way which does not bring about a loop crash!** We are serious. We will stick you in the Safe-Mode server that you hate the most if you intentionally crash a loop."

So, with that in mind, Spyro ran through his loop memories, as far back as they could go. He couldn't believe it. From the beginning there was Malefor, acting, dare he say it, *like a parent* . Spyro could even admit that he acted somewhat decently; he wasn't perfect, not by a long shot, but he *tried* . Spyro doubted that the Malefor he knew would have the patience or desire to set up himself so highly to two young dragons as he attempted to destroy the world. He knew that the Dark Master would never allow himself to suffer the indignity of children painting doodles on his hide, especially if some of those children had not even been dragons. No, the Dark Master would never have stooped so low as to consort with lesser species.

But still, something was wrong. His younger self didn't notice, for one, that Malefor was trying to keep them out of it... Whatever *it* was. Understandable, as parents were *supposed* to try and keep their children safe. But there were thousands of little clues that his in-loop self hadn't noticed because, for him, they were normal. For Spyro, who, if his timeline had been laid out in one loop, was old enough to be considered a master of Fire, Ice, Earth, and Electricity, they were plain as day.

Here his in-loop family had always been dodging 'soldiers', and originally it had been a game of 'Hide and Seek' as they slid from one location to the next. Spyro noticed from his memories that he was starting to get to the age where he was questioning certain things, especially some of the older scars on 'Dad's' scales. It was

hard to scar dragonhide, as many of Spyro's adventures both in and out of loop could attest.

He would go along with the Loop for now, but he needed more information.

Classic Loop 3.0

It was still rather early on in the loop for Spyro, and for now he had decided to mostly keep things baseline. He had a rather funny plan later on for a prank that involved Ripto, a bucket of shaving cream, and complex system of ropes and pullies, but until then he had nothing better to do than rescue the dragons. He checked his atlas, making sure he had gotten everything he usually had by that point. Smirking, he went over to the nearby pool and started jumping on the stones.

All he had left to do now was the speedway. Typically in the loops, he'd handle the speedways last. Not that he didn't like them or anything, quite the contrary. Although it was easy for him to get quick times on them now, he still liked the glorified obstacle courses and how he could blaze through them. It was just that he had gotten into that habit when it came to handling things baseline.

The secret 'passage' opened to reveal the hidden portal, and Spyro was quick to jump in. A quick trek through the portal mini-dimension and Spyro found himself once again at the start of the first of many speedways on his journey. Spyro was quick to check the score board...and promptly did a double-take.

Sunny Flight Speedway record - 0:10.00 - RD

Spyro narrowed his eyes. Somehow, he felt like he and Sparx weren't the only loopers in this loop.

Night Flight Speedway record - 0:10.00 - RD

Twitch

Crystal Flight Speedway record - 0:10.00 - RD

Twitch

Wild Flight Speedway record - 0:10.00 - RD

Twitch twitch

Icy Flight Speedway record - 0:10.00 - RD

Twitch twitch twitch

Sparx looked at the record and promptly scratched his head.

"I can understand her wanting to get the records for the speedways after we met her in that fused loop, but what's up with the whole 'ten seconds flat' thing?"

Sparx glanced over to Spyro, rolling his eyes. Spyro was sitting on the hill with a blank expression on his face, his eye occasionally twitching and his gaze glued to the scoreboard. Sparx sighed. He'd had the feeling that, with all the crazy stuff other loopers from different loops could pull off, this would happen eventually. Compared to that *other* Spyro they had met a few loops back, his Spyro prided himself on his abilities and had a rather big ego to go along with it.

So if there was one thing he could *not* stand, it was someone being better at something than him.

"You going to be alright?"

Spyro stood frozen for a few seconds before he finally scowled. "Sparx, I think I know what we're going to be doing for the next few

loops."

As Spyro turned around and started to walk off, Sparx face-palmed and let out a long sigh.

On top of a nearby hill, Rainbow Dash chuckled to herself. True, she could have gotten a much lower time than ten seconds for all of these speedways, but she didn't want to *completely* discourage Spyro. Considering, from the time he spent in his first fused loop in Equestria, she could gather the dragon thought of himself rather highly. As such, it was going to be rather fun knocking him down a few pegs.

Now she only wondered how long she could keep this up before he rage-quit and tried to end the loop like that time he tried to fight the non-awake Discord.

Reversed Roles pt 2. (Legend Loop 2.9 continued) (Feat: AbZHz101)

This time they hadn't evaded the soldiers. Malefor had insisted on using an earth technique to make their footsteps all but non-existent until they could get out of the swamp. However, they just seemed to always stop just short of running into a soldier, forcing them to turn around to find another way through. There hadn't been, and soon enough Malefor, Spyro and Cynder found themselves boxed in by six dragons in one of the swamp's clearings. From the smug look that one of the earth dragons had, it seemed obvious who was responsible for that.

"Well, well, well," said a fire dragon with a pompous attitude and slightly better armor than usual. "The *legendary* runaway slave, Malefor, and his two disappeared eggs."

Malefor grimaced at his own mocking title and snarled when the fire dragon mentioned Spyro and Cynder.

"Now, now, play nice and General Ignitus might just be willing to be lenient. Broken bones and shackles instead of putting your head on the pike it deserves, perhaps. And, of course, your whelps will know the joys of serving one who is above them. I'm sure that daughter of yours would enjoy learning all the right moves—"

Things came to a head at that moment. Spyro's mind had been flying, trying to process the nuggets of information that was hidden in the dung the fire dragon was spewing from his mouth. Quite a few things clicked into place, and while it made Malefor look better, it made the world itself look intolerably worse. He didn't miss the feeling that someone was channelling earth mana into the ground surrounding his and Cynder's paws. It didn't take a genius to figure out what would happen next. Unfortunately for the trapper, Spyro had trained under Terrador, who was much better with utilizing the earth as a tool.

Just as Malefor roared at the fire dragon, Spyro knocked Cynder towards him before using his Snake Skill to evade the trap in the opposite direction. A moment later, too late, the earth rose up to encase empty air.

"Idiot!" the fire dragon roared at his earth subordinate. "You four, catch that whelp! Keep him alive, he's worthless as a hide." Then he turned to the fear dragon in the group. "With me, focus your attacks on the girl. Her father won't let harm come to her and we'll wear him out that way."

The fear dragon nodded silently and the two began circling Malefor and Cynder, while a larger circle of four began to surround Spyro. It was an unfair fight. One dragon should have been enough for a single whelp, let alone four. It was their commander's way of taking all the credit for the capture they were sure was soon to follow. But what they didn't know was that they weren't facing a whelp who had never more than play-fought in his entire life. They were dealing with a veteran of multiple wars, who had faced far worse odds than four to one and had come out victorious, who had been trained by the

best masters of his generation and was probably a master himself. He had also grown up in a swamp nearly identical to this one.

They would need more dragons.

The earth dragon pounced at Spyro from behind, but, with only a minor look at the other three to keep track of their location, Spyro used his backwards Snake Skill and back-flipped under the attack. As his feet hit the ground, he grabbed the tail of the earth dragon before the bigger dragon could steady himself, and began to spin. Spyro twirled the dragon around once and then threw him at the dragon to his left, spitting out an ice shard to give chase. Then he unleashed his electric breath, which hit the dragon to his right and arced from his target to hit the other three dragons as well.

Figuring that would keep them legs over wings for at least a few minutes, Spyro ran over to help Malefor and Cynder. He saw the fear dragon gathering energy to use in a manner similar to his own earth breath. Spyro wasn't going to let that happen. One moment he was near the four dragons that he had taken down, the next there was a streak of flame across the clearing and Spyro's horns had sent the fear dragon sailing into the local fauna, some of which attacked back.

"What are you?" the fire dragon snarled at the purple whelp that had destroyed his vision of glory.

Deciding to pull a leaf out of Classic's playbook, Spyro put on a confident if somewhat confused smile and replied, "I'm just a purple dragon," in the same manner that one would explain one plus one equals two, or that the sky was blue.

The fire dragon snarled and threw himself at Spyro in an attack of intermediate skill, rather impressive for someone his age, but so far beneath Spyro's level to be laughable. In an instant, Spyro slipped his enemy's guard and broke the fire dragon's roots, causing the arrogant soldier to half front-flip and land back-first. Now with an opening to the sky, the family of three took to their wings, but the fire

dragon wasn't done. Still in the process of getting up, he bellowed a gout of flames at Cynder.

But Spyro was still in battle mode and was in between the attack and Cynder before anyone could blink. Then, in a feat of fire manipulation, he sucked in a breath and with it ate the entirety of the attack, magically dissipating the flames in his lungs. Then he retaliated with his own flames, a carefully controlled inferno compared to the fire dragon's wild campfire. The attack knocked the Fire Dragon out cold and the three airborne dragons fled, none of the soldiers willing to pursue.

Classic Loop 3.1

"Good news, everyone!" the Professor said, walking out of his lab and into the main room. "I think I've finally figured out what's behind this strange time anomaly!"

Spyro smirked. "Uh, yeah. Already figured that out. Besides, might be better if you hold off on the explaining until you get back to your home loop."

"Eh—wah?" Professor 'Hubert' Farnsworth said, looking blankly at the purple dragon.

Classic Loop 3.2

"Girls, the mayor just called about some sort of 'gnorc' thing turning everyone into stone!" the Professor said, darting out of his lab.

Spyro looked at him flatly. "Yeah, already took care of that. Welcome to the Multiverse, by the way."

"Huh?" Professor Utonium said, giving the purple dragon a strange look.

Classic Loop 3.3 (feat: UkeleleNarwhal)

"Pokemon, Pokemon everywhere! But where are all the people!?" the Professor said, walking out of his lab.

"Professors, professors everywhere! But where is *my* Professor!?" Spyro mimicked, a snarky grin on his face.

"Wha—?" Professor Oak said, scratching his head in confusion.

Classic Loop 3.4

"Yowzer! It's complete! The Poltergust 3000 is complete!" the Professor said, running out of his lab with what appeared to be a vacuum on his back.

Spyro smirked. "Who ya gonna call?"

"Oh... uh... The Mario Bros?" Professor 'Elvin' Gadd replied, scratching his cheek.

Classic Loop 3.5

"Oh my. It would seem I have looped in to a rather peculiar world this time," the Professor said, walking out of his lab.

By this point, Spyro had taken to setting up a beach chair so he could relax while he waited for the many Professors to exit the lab. "Your first clue?"

"Well, actually, it was the glowing tubes that apparently did nothing," Professor 'Hershel' Layton said, crossing his arms as he gave a warm smile.

Classic Loop 3.6

"It...lives! They said I was crazy! But I showed them!" the Professor said, rushing out of his lab. "After months of slaving and headaches, I have created *super toast!* "

Spyro blinked before he turned to Sparx. "I swear, they're getting weirder by the second."

"It's not weirdness! It's *science!* " Professor Membrane said, rushing back to the lab.

Not a second later, an explosion was heard from within. Spyro face-palmed.

Classic Loop 3.7

"Spyro! So good to see you!" the Professor said, walking out of his lab. "I don't know why, but lately I've been getting the darndest sense of déjà vu..."

Spyro paused, raising his head from the beach chair as he looked at the Professor with wide eyes. "Wait... You actually remember me?"

"Of course I do," said the Professor, straightening his glasses. "Why wouldn't I?"

Spyro shook his head before looking at Sparx. Not a second later, he looked back at the Professor and pulled one of his extra copies of *All About Looping* out of his subspace.

"Here," he said, handing it to the Professor. "You might want to read this."

The Professor grabbed the book, eyeing it curiously before he began to read through it. As he did so, Spyro looked over to Sparx.

"You know, Sparx," Spyro said, sitting down. "After all the Professors we've encountered in the loops, I'd rather have our Professor looping

any day."

Fused Loop 1.2 (Feat: Masterweaver)

"...We never speak of this loop," Legend growled.

"Agreed," muttered Cynder.

"Fine by me," Classic grumbled.

Ember sighed. "Well, alright, if you all insist. But you two are still our kids and school is still in session." She pulled a pair of paper bags out of the fridge and handed them to Cynder and Legend. "I made you *luuuuunchiiiies!"*

Cynder gave her a flat look. "Ember? Don't do that thing with your voice."

Legend Loop 3.8

There were many things in these loops did that Spyro liked and disliked. It was always a flurry of emotions for him. He hated the idea of having to relive the war, but even the trickiest of battles during his many adventures had become trivial to him thanks to his many loops of experience. The only real enemy he faced when he went through these 'vanilla' loops that could still give him a run for his money was Malefor himself, but that was a completely different story.

Though he was originally angry about how Cynder was dragged into this mess, it eventually gave way to joy when she managed to find a way to escape her fate. It still wasn't perfect, not yet. He was still working on a way to get to the unawake Cynder before she ever got cursed into that form, but at least even then he had managed to find a way to shorten her time in that form greatly. It was very much a rollercoaster of emotions for him, but there was always one thing he was thankful for.

Spyro smiled as he walked along the path through the swamp towards the Dragon Temple. He could still remember his first loop despite the countless number of times he'd looped since. The pain and confusion it had caused, the feeling of helplessness...and the small spark of joy, despite all that, at getting to see his mentor again. If there was one dragon on Spyros 'people to save' priority list that was right next to Cynder...it was Ignitus.

Ignitus had always been there for him. He was always there to ease the burden as much as he could. Even though he wasn't awake, he always had something new and wise to say to the purple dragon. Spyro looked up to him, dare he say, even more so than his adopted father. Maybe it was because he was also a dragon, but regardless, he held his mentor in high regards.

This, however, always made the end of the loop sting even more. In the baseline, Ignitus sacrificed himself so he and Cynder could make it through the Belt of Fire. That was so long ago thanks to these loops, and yet it was something he would never forget for the rest of his life. Hearing his mentor howl in pain as he was burnt alive... Spyro shuddered just thinking about it.

These loops had given him a second chance, though, much like they had for Cynder. Though saving his mate was top priority, making sure his mentor didn't burn to a crisp was a very close second. With years of elemental experience under his belt, Spyro could easily help Ignitus get past the Belt of Fire. But even when he managed to accomplish such a feat, whatever forces were at work seemed determined to make sure Ignitus would not make it to the loop's end.

Whether it be him trying to protect them from an elite enemy, trying to hold off hordes and hordes of smaller ones, or, rarely, even trying to assist in battling Malefor... Ignitus would never see the world being repaired. Even when, through some stroke of luck, Ignitus had survived all that, once Spyro pulled the world back together again, Ignitus was nowhere to be seen. Spyro sighed, closing his eyes as he walked.

Was he doing something wrong? He couldn't be sure. All he knew was that, even though it was a long ways off, if he couldn't figure out how to save his mentor before these loops ended, he would never get another chance like this again...

He felt a gentle wing placed over him. He looked over to see Cynder staring at him with a concerned look. Spyro smiled, nuzzling his mate. If nothing else, he was with a loved one for the time being.

Continuing on their way through the swamp, having done this enough times to know exactly where he was, he was about to round the corner where he would encounter his mentor for the first time. He smiled slightly. At the very least, he could enjoy the time he had with Ignitus before the loop ended. But as he rounded the corner, he paused.

Where there should have been an adult dragon standing there, there wasn't. Spyro blinked, glancing over to Cynder before looking back at the vacant spot.

"Wha... Where's Igni—?"

He was interrupted by a roar that pierced the surrounding area. Spyro and Cynder hunkered down. Spyro knew that roar.

"It's coming from the Dragon Temple! *Hurry!* " Spyro exclaimed, darting off down the path as fast as his paws would carry him.

Spyro paused as he came across the temple. Oddly enough, the doors were wide open this time. Cautiously, he nodded to Cynder and they slowly made their way through. Spirit gems littered the ground as they walked, no signs of life anywhere. Finally, as they made their way to the training room, they paused at the sight before them.

Ignitus stood his ground as he tossed the final ape against a wall and it burst into spirit gems from the impact. Ignitus panted as he

tried to steady himself. Turning around, his eyes went wide when he saw them.

"Spyro! Cynder! Something terrible has happened!" Ignitus said, rushing over to them. "I'm not entirely sure what's going on, but Malefor's back! I can't find the other guardians anywhere, either! I'm not sure what kind of trickery he's pulled, but—"

Spyro tuned out his mentor as he stood expressionless. He tried to say something, but no matter how he tried, nothing would come out. He began to shake, though it wasn't from fear or rage. He blinked, pinching himself slightly to make sure this wasn't a dream. When he felt the stinging sensation on one of his legs, he was confronted by a fact he couldn't believe.

Ignitus was awake.

"I'm sorry about all this. After everything you two have been through, I wish there was another way. You two are the only ones who managed to stand up to Mal— *!* "

Ignitus' ramblings where interrupted when he felt something grab onto his leg. Glancing down, he saw Spyro hugging one of his forelegs, a smile on his face as tears started to form in his eyes. Spyro couldn't believe it. It was like the first loop he'd gone through all over again, only this time, it wasn't loop Ignitus. It was *his* Ignitus.

Reversed Roles pt. 3 (Legend Loop 2.9 continued) (Feat: AbZHz101)

The family of three continued until the swamp where they had encountered the soldiers was hidden by the horizon. Only once they were sure that no one had picked up their trail did they look for a place to land. As they flew, Spyro thought about how he would explain what was going on. Explaining the loops to non-loopers... Well, it had worked well in the past. Then again, he had also heard horror stories about a 'Dumbledore' and memory wipes. While he

was pretty sure neither Malefor nor the current Cynder had that particular capability, he couldn't completely guess as to how they would react.

Spyro stopped for a moment to examine his current line of thought. Here he was in a high-variant loop, about to explain things to the local versions of his worst enemy and his mate, both of whom were currently his family, and at no time did it cross his mind to lie. Loop memories flashed before his eyes, sometimes the images having ghostly images of his 'actual' family superimposed over the top, reinforcing—or perhaps it would be better to say reasserting—the fact that they were family. They didn't deserve to be lied to, they deserved the truth, though that still left the question of how he should explain this.

Approaching the mountains, they continued, soon enough finding a cave that would suit their current purposes. After the three descended into the cave, an awkward silence gripped them and no one was quite sure how to begin. It was Cynder who finally broke the silence. "Spyro... What's going on? What was all that back there?"

Spyro nervously glanced at the two waiting dragons before trying to begin. "I've been trying to figure out how to explain this all day, but I haven't figured out a particularly good way yet," Spyro admitted. "This is really strange but I swear that what I'm going to tell you is, to the best of my knowledge, true."

Spyro took a deep breath before continuing. "The reason why I was able to do those amazing things was because I'm currently living in a repeating history. Just one day I wake up and everything is completely different from when I went to sleep. It either resets or changes so completely that I cannot even fathom how it came to be. I have the memories of my 'past lives', I guess you could say, as well as before I became aware of the timeline shift. I remember my entire life with you, but also since this morning I have centuries, no, millennia of memories and experiences, many of them being trained by four older dragons in the ways of Fire, Earth, Ice, and Electricity.

And, with them, the training and battle experience that such bestows."

Then, to prove it, he pulled *All about Looping* back out of his subspace pocket. "...I've met others in the same situation that I'm in. We were given this to help explain our situation."

Then he realized that, because of their background, it was unlikely that they could read. Well, there was the flush of embarrassment.

"...Have you met other versions of us?" Cynder asked.

Spyro blinked, shocked by the statement, then shook himself. "Yes," he replied evenly. "You and I are always rather close."

Cynder smiled, her curiosity abated. Malefor, however, remained thoughtful, still looking at the book Sypro had procured from seemingly thin air. "And myself?"

When Spyro hesitated to respond, Malefor looked at the smaller dragon with a frown. "You haven't met other versions of myself?"

"No, it's not that..." Spyro said, trailing off.

"Then I don't see why you can't tell me what they were like. I'd much like to know how I compare."

"Trust me, you don't."

"Spyro, I am a grown dragon. I can make my own decisions. I realize that my past hasn't been the best but I would like to know." He paused before continuing. "I need to know if this world...if this is the best that we can strive for."

"It isn't," Spyro replied. "I know very little about the politics of this world, and already I know I have seen far better. Our first encounter with soldiers proved that."

"You're dodging my question," Malefor stated with a frown.

"Please," Spyro replied with tired eyes. "Let it go. I don't want..."

Malefor's frown deepened, but his eyes softened. "Alright, if you truly believe that I will be happier." Seeking to change topics, he thought back to what his son had said. "Fire, Earth, Ice, and Electricity," he mumbled, "...but not Convexity?"

"I know of it," Spyro replied, "but I have lacked someone to instruct me, so what I know is mostly from self-experimentation. And I often cannot truly practice it, because..." He turned his head away. "The last dragon who delved too deep became insane and tried to destroy the world. My teachers often fear my study of it."

Malefor began nodding at Spyro's explanation, as if comparing the new data to his own and finding them consistent. "Yes, I can see that. Convexity is not something to experiment with lightly. Its very nature is what allows its great power but also the way that so easily turns a dragon's motivations."

Spyro stared at him in shock.

"There are quite a few tales of the folly of those purples or blacks that used and fell to Convexity. I studied them rather extensively. I dare say, had I not had a theory as to why it so often happened, I most likely would have followed them. Convexity is...different. More than any other element, it requires the correct mindset, and the one it requires is very difficult to achieve even in controlled settings, much less in a fight."

"Could...could you teach me?" Spyro asked hesitantly. Then, looking at Cynder, he amended his question. "Could you teach us?"

"I admit, I had planned on waiting until you were older, but it seems that we might not have the time to wait," Malefor admitted. "Convexity, how interesting a name. It is often used in conjunction with lenses and mirrors, with bending light. Convex lenses draw all light behind it to one single point. Similarly, Convexity draws all our power to one place, but it also does so to our minds."

"The reason that this is a problem is because we often have parts of ourselves that we dislike; dark spots, if you will. And these too are magnified, along with everything else. This brings a greater contrast to these thoughts than what we are used to, meaning that it is more difficult to ignore the impulses. The shock often means that we fall to them, and the dark spots rapidly consume our normal mind. Often, when we see this, we try to 'increase the brightness', as it were, to drown out the dark with light. But when we do, we only end up increasing the contrast, making ourselves more vulnerable."

"Then what should we do?" Spyro asked, enraptured by the discussion and the potential to finally leash his Dark Form.

"Well, if increasing the contrast makes it worse, then what should make it better?" Malefor replied with a smile. At the look of dawning horror on Spyro's face, he began laughing. "I think you've half got it. We have to lessen the contrast. But not by falling to base instincts. Instead, we should seek to understand the where and why of those impulses and integrate them into our normal self. I've found that, often, by taking the same impulses that are so destructive if left alone and pointing them at a different target, they become much more beneficial."

"To best wield Convexity, you must be at inner peace with yourself, a state that I admit I have not currently reached. However, I am getting closer and, with it, I am less inclined to lose myself."

Classic Loop 3.9: (A Heart of Crystal pt. 1)

Ember awoke with a blink. Immediately, she knew something was off. She was still in her dragon body, that much she could assure herself on, at least. However, for once she hadn't awoken in her room. Scanning her surroundings, wherever she was, she concluded that it definitely wasn't the Dragon Realms.

Though the town she was in still had the bright and cheery charm of the realms, the houses around her were made of wood instead of

Artisan-grade marble. Off in the distance, she could see rolling green fields not unlike the Artisans, but something about the nearby forest unnerved her greatly. The striking detail, however, was the population of miniature horses of all different colors of the rainbow.

Despite the rather saccharine look of this place, Ember gulped as she shuddered slightly. She'd known this would eventually happen, and was grateful that it was some place that didn't look too dangerous, but this was the first loop that she wasn't with her family.

'Okay, Ember. Calm down. Remember what the other *Spyro taught you,'* she thought, trying her best to come off as unassuming to the beings around her. *'Check your 'in-loop memories' before anything else.'*

Proceeding to do so, she frowned slightly and wished she hadn't. From what they told her, she was a dragon that had come to live with the ponies in Ponyville because she just didn't fit in with her society. The dragons of this realm were a rather rowdy bunch. Her early life wasn't one of pleasure, having been teased and poked by the others because of her gentle nature. Her scales being bright pink hadn't helped matters much, either.

If nothing else, she could at least take solace in that her in loop parents had more or less been the same as her usual ones in that they had tried to protect and comfort her as much as they could. But, regardless, the damage had made its mark and Ember had become known as 'the wimpy pony lover' to her own kind the day she finally couldn't take it anymore and moved to a much nicer crowd.

She shook her head, pushing those memories as far back as she could before they could leave permanent trauma. Focusing on more recent events, she let out a sigh of relief. Though the crowd she was in was a bit wary of having a dragon among them—she could still feel a few of them giving her uneasy looks—they were much more accepting of her than her own kind. The fact that her early loop trauma had left her rather timid had helped. She sighed. At least that meant this loop wouldn't be nothing but torture.

However, the thing that unnerved her the most was that she had no in-loop memories of Spyro, nor of Sparx, Hunter, the other Spyro and his Sparx, or Cynder. From this, she could assume that none of them were here in this loop. Which meant, for the first time in her looping life, she was completely on her own.

Once again, despite her saccharine surroundings, she hunkered down and shivered, her blue eyes darting from left to right.

'Alright, Ember. Just stay calm. At least you're in a peaceful place. Best thing you can do is just go along with what your pre-awake self did and ride the loop out.'

With that thought in mind, she continued what her pre-awake self had been doing and continued her grocery shopping.

Ember walked along the path in an almost trance-like state, her mind focusing on more recent in-loop memories. Apparently, when it came to carrying over from her normal loops, she still liked to volunteer in childcare. Since there was no apparent daycare, though, this meant she spent most of her time helping out at the local schoolhouse. Understandably, considering the dragons of this world, most of the parents were rather apprehensive about a dragon being around their young. But the school teacher, Cheerilee, didn't seem to mind too much.

Her in-loop memories told her that Cheerilee was responsible for most of the town warming up to the pink dragoness, having seen the gentle nature in her that most wouldn't catch at a glance. Of course, her helping her out in teaching draconian history, a rare history not many ponies knew much about, probably helped, but that was a minor detail.

Currently, her in-loop memories told her that tonight was the Summer Sun Celebration, and as a result, school was closed for the holiday. Her in-loop self had planned to spend the day just keeping to herself. She wasn't even planning to attend the celebration.

Ember frowned. She couldn't believe how reclusive her in-loop self was, but at the same time she couldn't exactly blame her, either. At the very least, she could try to be a bit sociable now that she was awake. How to go about it, though, considering her species didn't exactly have the cleanest track record, was going to be a thing.

"All I'm saying, Twi, is that having accessories is one thing. Walking around looking like you lost a fight with a jewellery store clerk is something completely different!"

Ember blinked before turning around. She was instantly met with quite possibly the oddest sight she had seen from this loop so far. Walking along the path was a lavender unicorn. Given what she had seen so far, that wouldn't be any different from the norm, but the fact that said unicorn was dressed up from head to heels with golden chains, a pair of over-sized shades, golden braces on her teeth, and an oversized cloak hanging around her neck was more than enough to raise some heads. Ember had no idea how the huge cloak didn't snap the unicorn's neck.

The unicorn looked down at the young purple dragon next to her with a grin, possibly blinding a few beings with those impossibly shiny braces.

"Ah am tellin' ya, Shpike! Theesh whill be tha new styl of tha futura."

The young dragon blinked before shaking his head. "You realize I can't even understand you with those ridiculous things in your mouth, right?" he said, crossing his arms. "Seriously, what's up with you lately? You've been acting weird ever since you read that book this..." Spike trailed off when he noticed the eavesdropper on the conversation.

The unicorn raised an eyebrow as the drake's mouth hung open. Following his train of sight, her eyes fell upon the pink dragoness. She blinked, though it was quickly followed by a friendly smile. "O', hhello. Fhe'llow loopa?"

Ember blinked. The unicorn glanced down at herself and then promptly blushed as she rubbed the back of her neck.

"O', shorri'," she said, before her horn began to glow. In a flash of light, all the outlandish things she was wearing disappeared. She gave a smile. "Again, sorry about that. I didn't realize we had an outside looper this loop."

She bowed before looking back at Ember. "You must be new to the loops. I've never seen you before, so that's a pretty good clue. I'm Twilight Sparkle, the local loop anchor, by the way. You can call me Twilight, though."

Ember paused for a few seconds. Quickly remembering her manners, she was quick to bow too. "Nice to meet you. I'm Ember. Just Ember, though."

"Well, nice to meet you, Ember," Twilight said before she raised a hoof towards the surrounding town. "Let me be the first one to welcome you to Equestria. We're a sanctuary loop, which means you can unwind and relax here. Just don't do anything too disruptive, though, as we can and will send you to the moon if you cause too much trouble."

Ember jumped slightly, quickly raising her paws in front of her as her eyes went wide. "Oh, you don't have to worry about that! I rarely ever do pranks in my home loop, and I don't generally like causing trouble, so..."

"Don't worry, we don't mean stuff like pranks and that," Twilight said, scratching the back of her head as she gave an embarrassed smile. "We mean stuff like destroying towns, seriously harming other loopers, assisting bad guys, that sort of stuff."

At this, Ember gave a slight sigh before she smiled. "Well, that you *definitely* don't have to worry about with me."

"Well, that's good to hear," Twilight said, giving a more genuine smile. "In that case, enjoy your stay here in Equestria! As said, you're free to do whatever you like so long as it's nothing extreme." She sat down. "Anything in particular you want to do?"

Ember paused before she too sat down. "Well, I've never really been to this universe before, and this is my first time being in a loop without someone from my universe being there with me, so I was wondering if..." Ember said, glancing downward as she scratched the back of her neck. "If you could introduce me to some of the other awake loopers here?"

"Sure!" Twilight said, giving a smile. "Surprisingly, though, despite how many loopers there are in this world, there aren't that many who are awake at the moment." With that, Twilight got up and turned around. "Come on. I was just about to meet the others as per usual in my baseline, anyway."

Ember gave a smile as she got up and began to follow Twilight. She paused, however, as she glanced down. The small purple dragon who was with Twilight was looking up at her with eyes wide and jaw dropped. Ember glanced away awkwardly, scratching the back of her neck.

"Um..."

"Huh? Oh!" the baby dragon exclaimed, a luminescent blush on his face as he glanced downward. "I-I'm Spike! Nice to meet you!" he blurted out without thinking before looking over to Twilight. "Uh, Twilight! Wait up!"

Twilight glanced back to see her currently unawake assistant rushing over to her with a blush on his face. She giggled. *'Looks like Rarity has some competition this loop.'*

Ember let out a slight chuckle before she was quick to catch up to them. With that, the group of three led by Twilight began their tour of

the town. As she walked, Twilight raised an eyebrow and turned to Ember.

"Hey, Ember? Now that I think about it, *have* we ever met before?"

"I don't think so. Why?"

"I'm not sure... I don't know why, but your voice sounds oddly familiar to me..."

Legend Loop 4.0:

There were many things that Spyro had to learn to just get used to about the loops. The sheer repetition, Sparx's shenanigans, having to explain to his parents every other loop where the black dragoness came from and that, no, they weren't getting up to any 'shenanigans' while they weren't looking. But quite possibly the oddest thing he had to get used to was this variant that kept popping up every few loops or so.

"Wow! This is amazing!" said a yellow dragon with zig-zagging horns that blatantly screamed 'hey, dummy, this is a lightning dragon!' He darted about the Dragon Temple. "It's exactly like in the video games! This is amazing! Oh my god, it's my dream come true!"

Spyro let out a frustrated sigh, placing a paw over his face. "I still don't get this... I mean, they're not even loopers! Why do they keep popping up so much!?"

"Beats me," Cynder said, shaking her head as she closed her eyes. "At least he has a fairly normal element this time, and not something ridiculous like blood or acid." Cynder glanced over to Spyro out of the corner of her eye. "All I know is that I babysat the last 'human-turned-dragon' last time one showed up. This loop, it's your turn."

"Wouldn't be so bad if they just kept to themselves, but *no* . They just *have* to try to play hero," Spyro muttered, placing his paw on his

forehead. He already felt a headache coming on.

"Yeah, because when you know next to zero about combat in your *normal* form and are in a completely new body that makes even *walking* hard on you, *clearly* you're the number one choice to take on an army," Sparx said, crossing his arms as he watched the human-turned-dragon trip over himself. "We should at least be grateful that only one shows up a loop and they can't loop themselves. Otherwise our world would probably be populated by more humans-turned-dragons than *actual dragons.* "

Spyro took a deep breath, rubbing his temples. At least he could easily deal with any problems their attempts to 'help' caused, but it still made their constant whining about him stealing their thunder not any easier in the slightest. The constant attempts to hit on either Cynder or him depending on their gender—or preferences—didn't help much, either.

He sighed. At least it was no worse then the loops where, defying all logic and reason, there was *another* purple dragon in the loop despite the whole 'once every ten generations' rule. Somehow they *always* ended up somehow being his brother or his sister, whose shenanigans made Classic seem *tame* by comparison. Taking a deep breath, he shook his head. At least they seemed more contained then the humans-turned-dragons...

Suddenly, one of the walls to the Dragon Temple burst open and an impossibly slender female figure stood through the dust cloud. All it took was one look at the figure's purple scales to make Spyro's left eye begin to twitch uncontrollably.

"Oh my god, it's, like, totally my brother, like, O.M.G, I thought I'd never find you, we're going to take on this war together and with my powers that are so rare even by purple dragon sta—!"

'Ancestors damnit!'

Resisting the urge to start smashing his head against the wall, Spyro let out a long, exasperated groan as he held his forehead in both paws. Cynder could only look at the newcomer with wide eyes before she shook her head.

"She looks exactly like me!" Cynder said, closing her eyes as she too face-pawed. "Why do *all* the female variant dragonesses always end up looking *exactly* like me except with different scale colors!?"

Legend shook his head, watching as his 'sister' ran over to the human-turned-dragon and the two began to banter on about who the latest superstar was and how they'd end up kicking Malefor's butt in the next few days. Giving a deep sigh, he turned to Cynder.

"Cynder?"

Cynder turned her head. "Yes, Spyro?"

"I'm normally not one to suggest this, but how about, the next loop we're both awake for, we just say balls to the war up until Malefor attempts to blow up the planet?" Spyro asked, a paw on his forehead in a failed attempt to quell his growing headache. "I'm going to be in *desperate* need of a vacation after this loop..."

(And there we have it. The first 'filler' of the Infinite Loops. Depending on how it's received, we might do a few more of these in while the mega-arc is going in the future. Also, take note how some chapters have '(!)' next to their title. That indicates that it's part of a 'mega-arc', and not just snip based shenanigans like this. Felt it was a good way for those who want to read mega-arcs and those who want snip based shenanigans to distinguish from one another.

Also, trying out a new format for this. Nothing too different, only this time it makes it so I'm not struggling to have one Classic loop for one Legend loops and visa-versa. Also allows for 'running gag' loops like the Professors you saw above.

Also, sorry if this chapter was a bit 'cross-over gag' heavy. The way we write for these loops is through a Forum thread, so as such it makes it a tad bit hard gage just how many cross-over gags there are in a chapter. (Though, I was the prime offender here...) I promise future snip shenanigans won't end up like this.

Anyways, tell me what you think of this filler chapter? Nice change from the mega-arc? Or does it break the flow a bit? As said, depending on how this goes, we might do this again in the future.

Snips:

2.8: Where's a Mega Horn when you need it?

2.9 Reversed Roles: Quite possibly the only time Legend would take advice from Malefor.

3.0: And you thought the flight-based trials in the original trilogy were *already* gruelling.

Loops 3.1 through 3.7: Professors. Professors everywhere.

Fused 1.2: On the bright side, at least it's a break from the war.

3.8: Even when you're technically older than them, having a looping parental figure is always welcomed.

3.9: To be fair, I'm sure a *lot* of other voices sound oddly familiar to these two.

4.0: ... /coughs/

Thirty ancient evil pile-up

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments below.)

Legend 15.1

"Sparx?" Legend asked, narrowing his eyes at his adopted brother.

"Yes, Spyro?" Sparx asked, glancing upward as he scratched the back of his head.

"Why is Cyril currently building a mini-fort to protect himself from 'the eggplant people from Zylous seven'?"

Spyro glanced over flatly to the fort that housed the currently shaking guardian of ice. Shaking his head, he glanced back at Sparx. Sparx chuckled nervously, poking his index fingers together as he averted his eyes.

"...Honestly, I'm not entirely sure. I was trying to set up a booby trap for the apes that would cause them to get avalanched by eggplants, then Cyril accidentally triggered it, I ended up getting encased in one of said eggplants, and then one thing kind of led to another..."

Spyro sighed, shaking his head. As if the guardians worrying about being invaded by apes on a daily basis every loop wasn't bad enough...

Classic 15.2

"Ah, if it isn't my favorite dragon!"

Spyro rolled his eyes as he walked up to Moneybags. Even in baseline, Spyro had never really been big on Moneybags. Dragons had a natural tendency to horde gems, and Moneybags was a greedy bear who wouldn't let him progress until he gave him gems. It

only seemed natural he'd be easily annoyed by him, and yet there were many other reasons he didn't particularly care for the bear, especially since looping meant he got an endless supply of gems.

Holding innocent animals hostage, helping bad guys if it meant gems for him, trying to keep a baby dragon egg to sell later... Those were merely a few things Moneybags was infamous for. It more or less went without saying, but getting to beat Moneybags up for the latter of those offenses was always an event Spyro looked forward to. Nonetheless, Spyro shook his head, noting that Moneybags was getting to the end of his usual speech.

"Of course, I *could* extend the bridge for a *nominal* fee..."

Spyro paused, placing a claw to his chin. If anything, it was faux move as Spyro debated what to do this loop. While true, he could have just shook Moneybags up enough to make him extend the bridge, doing such things was usually frowned upon by the looping populace. Spyro could have spent the entire loop pranking Moneybags as a way to get back at him, but he knew from experience that such a thing only provided temporary amusement...

Spyro smirked, putting his claw on the ground as he got on all fours. "Nah, that's okay. I got this."

Moneybags' jaw dropped as he watched Spyro spread his wings and fly across the gap. Spyro looked back, giving a grin.

Pranking Moneybags might have been a fleeting enjoyment, but seeing his face whenever he managed to find a way around paying him was always priceless.

Legend 15.3 (Arms and Armor pt. 1) (Feat: AbZHz101)

Ignitus stared at Spyro with wide eyes. "You're...you're alive!"

Then the weight of the world reclaimed the great red dragon and he returned to his depression. Spyro hated to see his mentor like this.

"But it's too late. Too late. And even if it weren't..." Ignitus chuckled mirthlessly. "What could I do? My lance is shattered, my armor scattered, my will trampled."

Then Ignitus closed his eyes and turned away from Spyro with the words, "Be gone, cruel phantom! My failures live with me to this day! You are not necessary!"

With that he blew a hot wind at Spyro and Sparx, launching them out of the cave. Spyro awoke as he landed in a heap.

"What was that all about?"

The strange events had left him unsure as to what to do. Should he help Cynder, who didn't seem to be awake this loop, or should he figure out what was wrong with Ignitus?

"Who cares?" Sparx asked. "The guy obviously doesn't want us bothering him. And I say, if he wants to be that way, then fine, we'll let him."

"Sparx," Spyro began. "I can't help but feel that there is more going on here than we know. Didn't you notice how he seemed to think me a conjuration?"

"Yeah, and?" Sparx retorted. "He also went off about a lance, armor, and failure. And really bro, why do you care? I mean, sure he might look a bit like you, but come on! That was just plain rude!"

"Lance... Armor..." Spyro muttered as his mind began making connections. "Hey, Sparx! Do you remember that armor that was scattered all over the swamp that we had to clean up last winter? Do you think those could have been his?"

"Eh, maybe," Sparx replied with a shrug. "But what's it matter? The dude clearly doesn't want anything to do with us."

"I don't believe that, Sparx," Spyro stated. "And I think that armor might just prove that we aren't merely phantoms."

With that, Spyro ran off to where the dragonflies had taken the huge armor, having been unable to destroy it. Thankfully, it was close by. Since he was awake, he was much stronger, and he had been mainly the one to drag the wretched things to their current resting place to begin with! Steeling himself, Spyro pushed the rattling pile forward, the metal making a surprising amount of noise on the muddy ground. As Ignitus came out of his cave to see the source of the racket, he narrowed his eyes at Spyro.

"We found your armor!" Spyro pointed out hopefully. "And your lance...though, we couldn't fix it," he finished somewhat lamely.

"You are a persistent one, aren't you?" Ignitus said. "What is it that you want?" Ignitus pressed forward, snarling. However, when he stepped on the broken lance he stopped, eyes wide. ""My lance... My armor... This is real! You're real!"

"Yeah, and we'll just be going now," Sparx said as he ineffectually tried to grab Spyro's horns and turn him away.

"Just a moment!" Ignitus pleaded. "I'm...I'm sorry that I mistook you for hallucinations meant to torment me...and that you went though all this trouble for me. The least I can do is offer what little hospitality I can, especially in these dark times." He picked up the entire pile and beckoned them inside. "I fear the skies are not safe."

As Spyro and Sparx followed Ignitus in, Sparx asked him, "What's with the armor, anyway? I mean, it's hard enough finding something that hurts Spyro here, but you..."

"There is more to your question than what you know," Ignitus replied. "Dragons, such as myself and young Spyro here, have scales strong

enough to protect us from any natural weapon, even our own teeth and claws. Then, long ago, one of our own fell into evil, the Dark Master, and took with him many of our kind. The dragons who remained true rose up against his tyranny, and both sides found to our mutual dismay that we were unable to wound the other. Eventually, we found tools, weapons that could pierce our enemies' hides, and more importantly our own. We knew that if we had discovered such advances, then it would be perhaps one or two battles at most before they did as well."

Ignitus sighed, remembering terrible lessons burned into his memory from childhood. "It became a terrible race, then, as both sides tried to secure better weapons and armor. We gained the alliance of the moles, the best damn craftsmen and women in all the Realms. They took the apes, brutish but terrifyingly clever in their own way."

Again Ignitus sighed, the story emotionally draining what little hope he had left.

"Then, in my father's time, the last of the Dark Master's remaining dragons fell, the evil one killed by a fluke a generation prior. We thought we had won. We thought that we could know peace." Ignitus chuckled bitterly again. "Oh, how wrong we were."

"Servitude had not made the apes grateful to we who saw ourselves as liberators. Instead, they saw it that we had killed their protectors and clients both to the last, thus did they take up the Dark Master's cause. It should have been easy to vanquish them, but even as a shade the Dark Master empowered his servants...so long as they were of use. He granted them powers to call upon things which should never have been, and they too could rip an unprotected dragon asunder..."

Ignitus carefully began to polish one of the pieces of his armor. "This armor was my lifeline on the battlefield, the physical symbol of my devotion to my kin, of my duty to protect them... And then, just before you were hatched, the apes attacked our temple where all the eggs,

including your own, were being kept. I was only able to save one egg that day, and from then on my failures only continued to mount.

"We launched a counter-offensive against the apes and, for a time, it looked as though we would win... Then Cynder came. Where she came from, I know not, but she is a black dragon that forced me to watch as one-by-one my comrades, the other guardians and commanders in our army were plucked from the battlefield. She also came for me. I escaped, but at great cost... My lance snapped, our forces no doubt routed and in disarray, and unable to do anything as my closest friends and subordinates were taken before my eyes... I foolishly discarded them, unable to stand the shame they reminded me of." Ignitus gazed forlornly at the metal and into his own reflected eyes.

"Um... Sir," Spyro began, careful not to say his mentor's name before it had been given. "I also found some other armors that fit me. Are they important?"

"May I see them?" the fire dragon asked. "And my name is Ignitus, young dragon."

He watched as Spyro pulled his three armor sets out, thinking that they had been hidden amongst his own armor.

"Oh, yes," he said, looking at the three complete sets. "I know these rather well. They are all mole-made, impeccable craftsmanship...if impersonal."

He picked up the gold helmet almost fondly. "These were given to members of my own division, which was led under my father before me. The Fire Lancers... Designed to protect against the lance's immense recoil, our dives were something to behold. And, if required, we'd smash a siege tower or two...each. When I led them, I would hand out each set personally... One of the ways that I would grow closer to my corps."

He then moved on to the silver armor. "Hmm... Probably made for a member of the Earth Demolition division. If we would tear something down from above, they would destroy it by its very foundations. Their flails always struck true."

Then he turned to the fury armor and his countenance grew grim.

"The oldest of the lot," he began, looking as if he had been forced to swallow something very sour. "From a desperate time. That armor was given to recruits in the days when the Dark Master still breathed. Our elders were desperate... It is a powerful armor to be sure, but they did not tell the soldiers of all its powers. Young dragons would enter Fury and destroy a platoon on their own...but would almost inevitably die when they stopped. It was during one of these Furies that the Dark Master was felled...by my own grandfather. He lived long enough to be elevated to a minor noble status, one which would apply to all his family before he moved on to the next life. Be careful when using it, Spyro... That armor has claimed many lives, and more than just a few were on our side."

Spyro gulped at the dark history that his fury armor had this loop.

"Still, though, it is a shame," Ignitus muttered.

Spyro wasn't sure if he was supposed to hear that, but his curiosity had been piqued nonetheless. "What is?"

"You are just about the age when young noble dragons would have their personal armor commissioned."

"I'm a noble?" Spyro asked.

"Even if you weren't, the fact is that purple dragons such as yourself only appear once every ten generations... Not only that, but there have been prophecies and legends telling of the kind of power that a purple dragon would wield... Had the chain of nobility remained and you been born to 'common' parents, the greater houses would have been jumping over themselves to be the first to find even the most

distant blood connection to you and bring you into their fold. Removing them is likely one of the few truly good things that has come about from this whole mess."

Classic 15.4

Spyro's eye twitched as he tapped his claw on the ground. His magic command line brought up, he had spent what felt like the past half hour working on this single project in hopes that it would make his base loop easier. However, no matter what he attempted, he would always be presented with the same line of 'coding.'

"Nice try, ya stupid dragon!"

Spyro let out an exasperated groan before banging his claws against the portal frame with his eyes closed and a scowl on his face. If there was one part of his baseline loop he always dreaded, it had to be this. He sighed before glancing over to Sparx. The dragonfly had a frown on his face.

"Don't worry, I packed the in-flight snacks," he said, heading in front of the portal.

Spyro's countenance drooped as he dragged himself over to the portal. Taking a few seconds of reprieve, Spyro jumped through the portal with a frown. There were many things Ripto loved to pull to torment dragons in his attempts to take over the realms, but...

'... Loading, please wait...

... Error. Redirecting...

... Loading, please wait...

... Error. Redirecting...'

...Nothing compared to breaking the portal transit system so it took forever to get to one's intended destination. Spyro groaned, his eyes drooping. Ripto's cruelty knew no bounds.

Legend 15.5

Being a guardian, Ignitus had seen many things in his time. Nothing compared, however, to seeing time repeat itself over and over again. Ignitus could only watch as Volteer and Cyril went through their usual bickering after Cyril had been saved. Try as he might, his attempts to keep a straight face were undermined as he looked on in wide-eyed curiosity. He looked down at Spyro and Cynder, Cynder's presence making this the only thing that was different this time. Ignitus blinked before shaking his head.

"Ahem, if you would excuse me..." Ignitus said, looking towards his fellow guardians. "I think I need to lay down for a moment. I think all this stress from the war is starting to get to me..."

Cyril and Volteer paused in their ramblings, turning to face Ignitus. Cyril was the first to raise an eyebrow, eyes full of concern.

"The war is weighing heavy on all of us, Ignitus," he began, giving Ignitus a concerned look. "However, this is a rare joyous occasion. The purple dragon of fate has finally revealed himself and it is thanks to him we are saved." Cyril tilted his head. "Are you sure you're feeling alright? We guardians may be old, but we're not *that* old yet, I'll have you know."

Ignitus stood blank for a few seconds before he finally closed his eyes. "I know. It's just..." Ignitus let out a sigh and turned towards the door. "P-please excuse me."

Cyril and Volteer turned their heads towards each other before they watched Ignitus leave the room. Spyro looked on sadly before turning to the other two guardians.

"Please excuse me as well. I just remembered, I needed to check on something," Spyro said, quickly leaving the room after his mentor.

Cynder hesitated, looking on as Spyro left the room with a concerned glance. She closed her eyes and shook her head. Spyro knew Ignitus far better than she did, so she knew there wasn't much she could add if she tried to help. For now, it was best to stay back and let him work this out on his own.

Cyril paused before glancing over to Volteer with narrowed eyes. "I can't help but get the feeling this is your fault."

"My fault!?" Volteer exclaimed, narrowing his eyes at Cyril. "How in the Dragon Realms are you able to assume that I was the cause of our companion's sudden stress!?"

"Well, for one, you ramble on like you've just discovered a new continent every time you discover something new. Clearly he's finally starting to get fed up with it."

" *I* ramble on!? Need I inform you, you pompous excuse for a noblemen, that *you* are the one who goes on about ice dragons like they are the ancestors' gift to dragonkind! I'll have you know that there is nothing more special about ice dragons than there is about dragons of any other element!"

"How dare you say that! I'll have *you* know that if it wasn't for my ancestors—"

Cynder's expression went flat. Maybe Spyro and Ignitus wouldn't mind too much if she tagged along after all...

Spyro walked down the hall, glancing down any hallway he passed in search of his mentor. Finally, he heard a deep breath echo out through the corridor. Narrowing his eyes, he was quick to follow where it had come from. Rounding a corner to a nearby door, he saw Ignitus laying down with his eyes closed. Spyro frowned.

"Ignitus?" Spyro said, slowly making his way into the room.

Ignitus raised his head, looking towards Spyro. He did his best to put on a fake reassuring smile, but the stern look he got in return told him that Spyro didn't buy it for a second. Ignitus sighed.

"I'm sorry, Spyro. I should be the one who's comforting you through this, and yet..." Ignitus lowered his head.

"It's alright," Spyro said, walking over to Ignitus and laying down next to him. "The loops take a while to adjust to, especially the first few of them."

Ignitus glanced over to Spyro, raising an eyebrow. "You said you, Sparx, and Cynder have been looping for some time now. Exactly how long has 'some time' been?"

Spyro glanced upwards, placing a paw to his chin. Finally, he shook his head as he looked back at Ignitus.

"Honestly, I couldn't tell. I know the last major variant loops were, like, one hundred and twelve loops ago," Spyro said, closing his eyes. "If I had to make a guess, though, I'd say we're well past the one thousand mark by this point."

Ignitus' eyes went wide at Spyro's estimate before he closed them. Finally, he began to chuckle. Spyro raised an eyebrow as he looked at his mentor, Ignitus shaking his head as he looked back at Spyro.

"Forgive me," Ignitus said, giving a soft smile. "I just found the thought of my pupil technically being far older than I am now amusing."

At this, Spyro found it hard not to chuckle either. Shaking his head, he looked back at Ignitus. Ignitus sighed, closing his eyes.

"I'm sorry," Ignitus said, lowering his head. "After everything you've been through, you and Cynder deserve to finally have peace. I wish

there was something I could do to make these loops end."

"You know that's not possible," Spyro stated, closing his eyes. "You read the book I gave you. It's not your fault. It's not anyone's fault."

Spyro reopened his eyes, looking towards his mentor. "Besides, the war isn't too bad anymore. Cynder's managed to figure out a way to escape...you know," Spyro said, flinching a bit, "and we can easily handle most of the baseline problems now. Pretty much the only one who can still give us a challenge is Malefor. It's not perfect, but at least it's better than the first time around."

Spyro stood up, walking in front of Ignitus and smiling. "I've been trying my best to end the war earlier than it usually does at the end of the loop, to give us a peaceful rest before it starts over again."

Ignitus raised an eyebrow, raising his head to look at Spyro. "Any luck so far?"

"Well...not exactly," Spyro admitted, lowering his head. "Though I can usually take care of most of the forces in Malefor's army, the only way to end the war for good, it seems, is to take out Malefor himself." Spyro closed his eyes. "The earliest known instance of his escape from his prison in the baseline is the Night of Eternal Darkness, but..." Spyro sighed, looking Ignitus in the eyes. "I...I'm not sure if I can kill him yet."

Ignitus tilted his head. "What do you mean? Don't you usually beat Malefor at the end of the loop?"

"Not...not really," Spyro admitted, looking down. "Most of the time we just fight him to a standstill until the spirits of the ancestors show up and drag him off to who knows where." Spyro shook his head. "And every time we think we've finally gotten a read on him, he pulls some new trick out of thin air and we're back to square one."

Spyro raised his head, meeting Ignitus' eyes. "I know it may seem selfish to not even try, but I don't want to attempt to fight him earlier

than normal until I know I can take him without the assistance of the ancestors, in case they don't show up."

Ignitus blinked before his expression softened. "Spyro, the ancestors will *always* be there to assist you, even if it doesn't seem like it." Ignitus smiled. "You should never doubt them."

"I know, but still..." Spyro sighed. "I'd like to be sure that I can, if only for myself."

A silence soon followed as Ignitus watched Spyro looking down at the ground. Finally, Spyro raised his head. "Ignitus?"

Ignitus gave a smile. "Yes, Spyro?"

"Is it alright if you still continue to teach me about the element of fire, despite the loops?"

Ingnitus closed his eyes, a soft smile on his face. Sitting up, Ignitus looked down with the smile never leaving his face. "Of course, my student. I may not be sure of how much you've learned in my absence, so to speak, but I'll help wherever I can."

Spyro smiled, walking over to Ignitus and hugging one of his forelegs. Ignitus draped one of his wings over Spyro, the smile still on his face. Even if Spyro was technically older than he was now, it was nice to know that he still wanted him as his teacher, even in this recession of reoccurring time.

"...Oh! I almost forgot!" Spyro said, looking up at Ignitus. "If, during the loops, you encounter a purple dragon that looks almost exactly like me but acts like studying is the plague, I want you to know that he isn't me."

"Wha—?"

"Don't worry. You'll understand when you meet him..."

Classic 15.6

Professor Oak examined Spyro as if the little dragon was a tablet that held all the secrets to the universe. Cautiously, he raised his hand to put it on Spyro's head. Spyro frowned.

"In case you're wondering, no, I am not a Pokémon," Spyro said, giving Oak a flat glare. "So don't even *think* about trying to shove me in a Pokéball."

Oak staggered back as Spyro began to talk. Spyro chuckled as Oak straightened his cloak as he tried to regain his composure. Unsure of what to say, Oak asked the first thing that came to mind. "Are you a boy or a girl?"

Spyro scowled, narrowing his eyes. "What do you think!?"

Oak paused, placing a hand to his chin. "Um... Girl?"

Spyro's left eye twitched. He was about to correct him, but he quickly paused. Shortly after, Spyro darted towards the woods and hid behind a bush.

A few seconds later, 'Spyra' came walking back out, her eye twitching and a scowl planted firmly on her face.

'Dammit! Can't these loops make up their mind already!?'

Legend 15.7

Spyro, Cynder and Sparx were standing outside Malefor's lair. Spyro turned to Cynder, who was looking on with narrowed eyes. She gave a sigh. Spyro frowned.

"You going to be alright?" he asked, walking over to her.

"Yeah," Cynder said, taking a deep breath. "It's just that, no matter how many times we do this, it never fails to unnerve me."

Spyro draped a wing over her, giving her soft glance. "Don't worry. Hopefully, once we figure out all his tricks, we won't need to do this any more."

Cynder looked at Spyro, giving a nod as she turned back towards the door. With steel-like resolve, Spyro and Cynder pushed the door open to Malefor's lair, only the light from outside lighting their way. However, when they saw what was going on inside, they could only stop and stare with blank expressions.

"I told you once, you irritating ingrate, the Dark Master bows to no one!" Malefor bellowed, glaring down sharply.

It only took one glance at the dragon Malefor was yelling at for Spyro to already feel a headache coming on.

"Silence, you incipit fool!" the purple dragon that looked no older than Spyro himself demanded. Had it not been for the random red runes that translated to nothing but gibberish to those who could read it tattooed on his scales, Spyro would have thought it was Classic playing a prank. "I'm the one who's been controlling you this whole time! You bow down to me!

"Wait... How does that work?" Sparx muttered, looking down to both Spyro and Cynder. "Isn't Malefor, like, a millennia old? This yutz doesn't look any older than Spyro."

Getting a shrug from Cynder in response, Sparx turned to Spyro. Spyro just placed a paw over his eyes, letting out a groan. Suddenly, the ground began to shake. Spyro jumped, looking around with wide eyes.

"What? The Destroyer isn't supposed to be here yet!" he exclaimed.

All of a sudden, the ground next to Malefor's throne gave way and a humanoid figure punched his way out, wearing heavy black armor with enough spikes on it to make Mega Man proclaim 'Screw this, I'm outta' here!'

"I LIVE!" the generic black knight proclaimed. ***"AFTER YEARS SPENT TRAPPED WITHIN THE PLANET, I LIVE ONCE AGAIN!"***

Both Malefor and Purple McGibberish Rune glared at the newcomer, as Spyro, Sparx and Cynder looked on with blank expressions.

"Wait, aren't we on a floating island, though?" Sparx asked, glancing down to the two dragons while scratching his head.

Continuing to be ignored in favor of what was currently going on, Malefor looked at the newcomer with a scowl.

"And who, dare I ask, are you!?" Malefor demanded, taking the time provided in the distraction to knock McGibberish Rune aside.

"I AM THE TRUE DARK MASTER, FOOL!" the generically ancient evil entity proclaimed, taking out a sword that one would swear had a built-in fog machine. The black smog emitting from it likely wasn't good for the environment in the slightest.

"Preposterous! There is only one Dark Master!" Malefor proclaimed, baring his fangs. "That title belongs to I and I alone!"

"NEY!" the supposed true Dark Master proclaimed, pointing his sword at him. ***"A PAWN OF A PAWN CANNOT BE A DARK MASTER! FOR YOU SEE, I'VE BEEN CONTROLLING THAT WHELP WHO'S BEEN CONTROLLING YOU THIS ENTIRE TIME!"***

As the supposed true Dark Master finished his claim, McGibberish Rune picked himself up and, faster than one could proclaim 'I call BS!', the left wall of Malefor's lair was blasted open and an armada of airships could be seen outside.

" *Malefor!* " a voice echoed out, as an ape made the seemingly impossible jump from the airship all the way through the newly opened back entrance of Malefor's lair.

"Impossible!" Malefor bellowed, seething with rage. "I wiped all the apes out years ago!"

"Or so you thought!" the ape proclaimed. A pair of totally-not-Wolverine-inspired claws armed themselves from his knuckles. "But, unfortunately for you, you failed to take into account the apes you forgot about in the swamp!"

"I burned that swamp down years ago!" Malefor spat.

" *Not that swamp!* " the ape said, stomping his foot. "The *other* swamp! The swamp on the other side of the world!" The ape shook his head. "No matter! It doesn't matter how we survived, for now I, the son of Gaul and prince of the apes, will have revenge for all apekind!" Gaul's bastard child raised his claw up into the air. "And then we will take over the world!"

"Impossible! *I* will be the one who takes over the world!" McGibberish Rune whined, hunkering down.

"NEY! THE WORLD BELONGS TO ME!" The true Dark Master proclaimed, now nearly covered in dark cloud fog from his sword.

"You're all wrong!" Malefor yelled, his left eye beginning to twitch. "The world must be cleansed so it can start over anew!"

"NEY! IF YOU BLOW UP THE WORLD, YOU'LL BE KILLED IN THE PROCESS TOO, YOU TWIT!"

"Impossible!" Malefor yelled, hovering in the air for dramatic effect. "I cannot die, for ***I AM ETERNAL!*** **"**

"Inconceivable!" McGibberish Rune yelled. "You cannot be eternal! ***I AM ETERNAL!"***

"NEY! YOU ARE BOTH WRONG! IT IS I WHO AM ETERNAL!"

As the cluster of villains began a shouting match over who was the more generically evil big bad, Spyro glanced over to Cynder. Cynder

blinked and met Spyro's stare.

"An...any idea on what's going on?"

Spyro sighed, shaking his head. "If I had to guess, somewhere there's a drunk admin passed out at his terminal..."

Suddenly, the ground began to shake again, and another crater opened up next to the supposedly true Dark Master. A ghostly white dragon that had only one eye and more teeth than the Osmond Family came flying out a second later.

"I LIVE!" it proclaimed, a ghostly white glow illuminating from it.

"Oh boy..." Cynder muttered. " *Ghost Dragon?* " she asked, turning to Spyro.

Spyro looked on flatly. Malefor's face was more red than the bright scarlet of McGibberish Rune's runes. Finally having enough of this, Malefor fired a Convexity Beam at the newcomer, but the beam passed harmlessly through him. Spyro's expression went flat.

"Ghost Dragon," Spyro said flatly.

"ENOUGH!" Malefor finally said, his far too sharp fangs bared at all the wannabe villains in his lair. " *I* am the Dark Master! *I'm* the one who shall do whatever he pleases with this world!"

"NEY! I AM THE TRUE DARK MASTER!" the supposedly true Dark Master said from his cloud of dark fog.

"Bah! Like either of you nitwits could be the Dark Master!" McGibberish Rune said, giving a scowl. "Clearly *I* am the Dark Master!"

As the argument wore on, Spyro looked over to Cynder with a flat expression. Cynder gave a nod and the two dragons began to head back out the door. Before they did so, the right wall of Malefor's lair was blasted open and another armada of air ships could be seen.

"Malefor!" a voice echoed out as what appeared to be an anthropomorphic skunk made the near impossible jump into the lair. "I, the king of skunks, have come to defeat you so that I may go unopposed in my quest to take over the world for skunkkind!"

"Get in line, pal!" Gaul's bastard child spat.

Then the ground began to shake again and yet another crevasse opened up. This time, what appeared to be a giant praying mantis crawled its way out. ***"I LIVE!"***

"Okay, that's it," Spyro said flatly as he turned around towards the door. "I'm out of here."

"Agreed," Cynder said, following close behind.

"Third'd," Sparx said, making sure he was the first one out as the small mob of generically evil big bads began arguing amongst themselves.

"ENOUGH!" Malefor bellowed, flying to the center of the room. "We cannot *all* take over and or destroy the world!"

"AND WHAT DOES THOU SUGGEST, THEN!?"

"It is quite simple," McGibberish Runes said, his scarlet red runes starting to glow.

" *There can only be* ***one!*** "

Spyro, Cynder and Sparx watched on from a safe distance as the ensuing fireworks from Malefor's lair began. Spyro's groaned, placing his paw over his eyes.

"I don't think Malefor even *needs* the Destroyer to blow up the world this time..." he muttered.

Sparx placed a hand on his chin as he landed on Spyro's head. "Ya know," Sparx said, looking down at the two dragons. "With all the apparent ancient evil entities that were apparently trapped in our planet, it's a wonder our world wasn't blown up ten times over by now..."

"At least the main evils seem to be taking care of themselves for a change," Cynder said, watching as McGibberish Runes went flying out of the lair. Shaking her head, she turned to Spyro. "What about the Destroyer, though? With Malefor distracted, maybe we can stop it for long enough so you won't have to repair the world this loop."

Spyro sighed, having already begun rubbing his temples. "I suppose. At least that way my headache can't become any worse than it already is..."

Ignitus watched on with wide eyes. Having only just started looping long ago and well aware of his fate should he try to help them get past the Belt of Fire, Spyro had managed to convince Ignitus to stay behind, hoping that for once he'd be able to survive a loop. Of course, being also aware of what happened after the Belt of Fire, Ignitus knew that, whether Spyro liked it or not, he'd end up becoming the next Chronicler no matter what.

Having already gotten the signal from the previous Chronicler, Ignitus was on his way to the White Isle. However, he could only stop and stare at the sight he came across on the way there...

"... *You* can't be the one destined to blow up the world! *I'm* the one destined to blow up the world!" what appeared to be a giant stone dragon bellowed, baring its stone fangs at its opposer.

The Destroyer said nothing, proceeding on its way. The stone dragon growled.

"Very well, then! You asked for it, for *there can only be* ***one!*** "

Fused 15.8

Legend reeled back, the multiple throbbing cuts he'd endured stinging like someone had rubbed salt in them. Legend frowned. This loop had been an oddly peaceful one. It was another loop where dragons lived more like the ones in Classic's world, only this time Legend was already living by himself. With his short break from the war, this should have been a peaceful loop for him... Emphasis on 'should have been.'

Legend had been through many adventures and endured pain far worse than he felt now. However, never before had he faced a greater challenge than what he was currently faced with. Legend sighed.

"Listen, I know you're not happy with how this loop is going for you, but could you at least *try* to cooperate? I'm doing the best I can to make this loop as easy on you as I can."

The purple ball of fluff Legend was addressing glared at him. Classic had a scowl planted firmly on his face. The loops may vary between resets, but he never expected *this* to happen.

Legend took a deep breath, shaking his head. *'I swear this loop is going to turn me into a dog dragon by the time it ends...'*

Legend 15.9 (Arms and Armor pt. 2) (Feat: AbZHz101)

Ignitus sighed as he treaded through the ruined armory. There had been a time when the greatest weapons of bygone heroes rested here. The prizes had been snatched, and everything else snapped underfoot. Despicable. Though, his search had not been completely fruitless. He had found a pair of training lances and a stone shield that had been covered by its destroyed siblings. They were not meant for battle, but in these hard times, Ignitus would not begrudge small miracles. He had also found teaching tools of the other three

guardians, a pleasant omen. He would hold on to such things for now.

Returning to where he had left his new pupil, Ignitus proffered the smaller lance to the younger dragon. "While this isn't exactly your size, it will have to do for now."

Hesitantly, Spyro took the weapon, forcing himself to try and determine what it was that Ignitus planned to teach him.

"Now, unfortunately, teaching one how to use this weapon indoors is...well, rather dangerous. The optimal speeds for a lance are quite high, and as you no doubt realize, high speed and walls do not mix well. Not only is there a risk of personal injury, but if done correctly we'd have to worry about the temple coming down about our heads. Alas, the skies are not safe for us at the moment, so we will have to make do with what we can."

Ignitus then stepped to Spyro's side before altering his grip and the positioning of the lance.

"From the pool I have seen a vision," Ignitus told Spyro and Sparx. "I have seen the location of one of the other guardians. Master of Electricity, Volteer, is being held in Dante's Freezer. Put on the Fire Lancer armor. We will have to hurry, for I fear his time is short."

"Wait a minute," Sparx interjected. "We? ...As in, you and us? I thought this was one of those 'go forth on this dangerous quest while I stay here and read a book or something trivial until your return' things," he said in a fair imitation of Ignitus's voice.

Spyro chuckled at the imitation, though he did privately admit, this was unusual. Normally, the only time Ignitus accompanied him on a mission was into the Belt of Fire.

Ignitus scowled. "Much as I like the idea of sending barely trained children to deal with the ills of the world, while I twiddle my claws,"

he began with a venom that could have put fear into even Malefor's black heart, "that is not feasible. One dragon is not enough to guard the temple, as I have little doubt that Cynder's forces will be mobilizing for here. And if the temple is overrun and we fail in getting Volteer to safety, our doom will be complete. No, in times such as these, we must stick together."

With that, Ignitus began to walk out. "Come, we have far to go before the light fades."

As the three flew towards the frozen wasteland, they heard the ever unwelcome chanting of the apes. It seemed that the simians had set up troops along the smaller islands and peninsulas between the major islands.

"Well," Ignitus said, observing the 'reinforced' positions. "What an opportunity. While I don't make it a habit to give impromptu lessons, in this case, I will make an exception. Spyro." He turned towards his student. "Watch and I will show you how to use a lance as it was meant to be used, and why it is still one of the most feared weapons in the Realms today. Follow behind me, there are some things that are best seen up close... Though, stay out of a dive for now."

At Spyro's nod, Ignitus picked a target, one of the fortifications that had the rock underneath it worn away, creating something like an 'O' shape. He snapped into a diving turn, locked his lance, and entered a dive, the air shrieking in protest as he passed. The apes threw everything that they could against him, bombs, rocks, even their own men, but Ignitus' path did not waver. As he came close to his target, a trickle of flames appeared on his back feet before engulfing him and his weapon entirely and propelling them to even greater speed. Ignitus struck his target and passed through. No longer was there an 'O' in the earth. There was simply nothing left.

Ignitus returned to the openly gaping faces of Spyro and Sparx.

"Surprised?" he asked with a laugh.

They nodded in unison.

"Though it is not the only thing that my troops could do, it was something of a specialty of ours. Now then, let's see how you do." Ignitus scanned the ground before spying a now open sentinel, its protectors having been taken out in his assault. "That one should do nicely."

"You want him," Sparx began with wide eyes, pointing at Spyro without looking at him, "to do that?" He pointed to the now nonexistent rock feature.

"He will have to learn some day and now is probably his best chance," Ignitus replied. "Besides, I don't think he will be old enough to do that for quite some time. Speed isn't the only part of the equation."

Spyro took a steadying breath and nodded. He locked his eyes on the target and began his turn. He locked his lance, the gripper digging into his shoulder, and closed his wings, diving on his target. The wind was howling in his ears and made his eyes water, but he forced them to stay open to maintain his line. A purple and gold streak in the sky, Spyro watched as his target came further and further into focus. When it seemed that he was at the right distance, Spyro unleashed a comet dash.

When the flames had receded, Spyro saw only water in front of him. Not wishing to test his luck in the water, he snapped his wings open and strained against his own momentum to pull level, instinctively keeping his lance from dragging across the waves as he did so. It was draining work, but eventually his momentum gave up before his wings did and Spyro began to level out and then rise back into the sky.

"Well done, Spyro!" Ignitus congratulated. "Well done."

"Dude, that was awesome!" Sparx yelled. "Though Spyro, bro, are you okay?"

"A bit tired, but I'll be fine, Sparx. Ignitus, should I be learning this quickly?" Spyro wondered, doubtfully holding the weapon.

"No," Ignitus replied with a smile. "But it is likely that your Ancestors are helping you, subconsciously guiding your actions, as they do to all of us in our times of greatest need. As you are our best hope, I think they might be just a bit more willing to lend aid than usual."

Classic 15.10 (A Heart of Crystal pt. 2)

Twilight's tree library was bustling and Ember's 'Welcome to Ponyville' party was in full swing. This loop had been rather interesting so far. As it stood, despite Twilight informing her that they possessed quite possibly the largest amount of loopers, this loop only three others were really awake. From what she had told Ember, she'd meet two of the three eventually. For now, though, there was only one other looper in the immediate area.

"So then, deary, how are you enjoying our loop so far?"

Ember turned around, coming face to face with a white mare with a glorious mane.

"I'm really enjoying it," Ember said, giving Rarity a soft smile. "I was a bit unnerved at first, since this is my first fused loop by myself, but all the loopers here so far have been really nice."

"That's good to hear," Rarity said, sitting down at the table Ember was at. "If you ever need anything, feel free to ask."

Ember had a grin on her face. There was a short pause and only the sounds from those enjoying the party could be heard. Ember blinked, an odd feeling like she was being watched coming over her. She turned her head to look behind her, catching Rarity's attention in the process and making her look as well. The two ladies caught sight of the purple head of a small dragon whose emerald eyes were peeking out from behind a chair. Realizing he had been spotted,

Spike quickly jumped and dashed away, a luminous blush on his face. Both girls giggled at the sight.

"I still find it a bit hard to believe that you're married to the looping Spike," Ember said, looking back at Rarity. "I mean, I know you two have apparently been looping for many, many years, but it's hard to view him as an adult dragon."

"Yes, it takes quite a few loopers to wrap their heads around it at first," Rarity said, a slight smile on her face. "Looping Spike has grown up a lot compared to his baseline self, though, and he also managed to gain complete control over how mentality can affect the age and size of his body. He's one of the few loopers whose body can grow alongside his mentality." Rarity have a slight giggle before shaking her head. "The next you're here while he's awake, deary, you should see if he can teach you how to do so as well. It's a very rare thing for looper's bodies to actually age in the loops, and it's usually an ability most loopers would love to have."

"Oh, no, that's alright," Ember said, putting her paws in front of her. "I'm quite happy with my body the way it is. Besides, I'm not sure if Dragon Realm dragons can actually do that."

Ember turned back to the table and paused, nervously shifting her eyes. "Um, sorry about...uh..."

"It's alright, dearie," Rarity said, shaking her head. "I know my Spike, the awake, wouldn't so much as look at another women. Besides, I'm not the jealous type."

There was a silent pause as Rarity glanced over to see Spike looking down from the balcony, though he quickly ducked back when he saw Rarity looking in his direction. Rarity narrowed her eyes slightly. She was unable to make out exactly who Spike was looking at. A few seconds passed before Rarity looked forward and hovered a small glass up to her lips.

"...Though, do keep in mind, deary," Rarity said before she took a sip, her voice a tad bit more serious than before. "If you do decide to humor his childish crush, keep in mind that his awake self *is* a married dragon." In a small flash of light, her wedding ring appeared on her horn.

Ember gave a slight nervous chuckle, quickly raising her paws in front of her as she gave a nervous grin. "Oh, you don't have to worry about that! I don't go after those who are already in a relationship, and even if he's technically older than I am—"

Rarity took a deep breath, shaking her head as her expression lightened. "I'm sorry about that. I have no *idea* what came over me there." She placed her wedding ring back in her subspace.

Once again, Ember chuckled nervously. Just as things began to get uncomfortably silent, Twilight walked up to them. Giving a small smile, she sat down. "So how have things been so far?"

Ember turned to Twilight, a wide smile on her face. "Pretty good."

"That's good to hear," Twilight said with a smile before turning to Rarity. "Anyway, any ideas on how to deal with Nightmare Moon?"

"Hmm..." Rarity said, placing a hoof to her chin. "...Trapping her in drapery?"

"Done it."

"...Trap her in a bubble?"

"Done it."

"Hm... Drop octopi on her?"

"Done it."

Ember watched on with a blank stare as Twilight and Rarity bantered ideas back and forth. Finally, Ember shook her head. "Um, excuse

me?" she asked, butting into the conversation. "What are you talking about?"

Twilight blinked, looking at Ember. "Oh, right!" she exclaimed. "We haven't told her about that yet."

With that, Twilight brought out the ever famous book she was almost always reading at the start of her loop. As the book was floated over, Ember carefully took it in both claws.

"You can keep that if you want. Birch only knows how easy it is for me to get more copies of that," Twilight said, rolling her eyes. "It goes into quite a few details about it, but to give you the abridged version: Nightmare Moon is the evil alter ego of Princess Luna, who used to rule alongside her sister Princess Celestia over a thousand years ago. She controlled the moon and night, as Celestia did the sun and the day."

"However, Princess Luna eventually grew jealous of Celestia, with how ponies usually slept through the night and were more active during the day," Rarity joined in, putting her glass on the table.

"In her jealousy, Luna sought to overthrow Celestia so that her night would reign supreme and never go unappreciated again, becoming Nightmare Moon in the process. Nightmare Moon attempted an attack on Celestia, but even though it seemed like she had won, Princess Celestia used the Elements of Harmony to stop her, imprisoning her on the moon," Twilight said, raising her hoof. "And after a thousand years, she is to escape this Summer Sun Celebration."

Ember listened to the story with wide eyes. She opened the book, flipping a few pages in and seeing the respective images of white and blue winged unicorns. Looking back up, she stared. "Wait, did you say *this* Summer Sun Celebration? Isn't that...?"

"Oh, oh! No need to worry! Taking care of Nightmare Moon is rather easy for us at this point," Twilight said, waving her hoof in front of her

in reassurance. "It's actually become a bit of a game for us. How unconventionally can we defeat Nightmare Moon? Without accidentally traumatizing Luna when she reverts back, of course."

"So far, we've pretty much done everything from sicking Spikezilla on her to trapping her in a bubble," Rarity added, though she was quick to scratch the back of her neck. "Of course, Spikezilla was back during our earlier looping days, and something we're not particularly proud of..."

Ember blinked. "How did you defeat her in baseline?" she asked, tilting her head.

"Well, normally, my friends and I are supposed to travel into the Everfree Forest to the old castle, where we'd get the Elements of Harmony and use them to expel the evil in Luna," Twilight explained, giving a slight sigh. "Of course, I'm a lot less crabby about it now than I was my first time through."

"Well, why don't you use those? I'd be interested to see how things went with you girls the first time through," Ember said, giving a small smile.

Rarity paused, looking upwards as she put a hoof to her chin. Shortly after, she turned to Twilight. "How about it, Twilight? Now that I think of it, it *has* been quite a while since we last went along with the baseline."

"Maybe," Twilight said, putting a hoof to her chin. "Ember appears to be replacing Fluttershy, though. Though outside loopers getting a husk element isn't unheard of, whether or not she gets kindness specifically has yet to be seen. Of course, juggling around the Elements between us is nothing new..." Twilight said, slowly becoming more and more lost in her ramblings. Finally, she jumped slightly. "Oh, and, of course, if Ember will be willing to wield an element."

Ember paused, her expression blank. *'I'm not even sure what an Element of Harmony is...'* she thought, her expression remaining unreadable. *'I don't think even Spyro has tried using stuff from other loops yet. I'm not even sure if it'll work because I'm replacing the normal user of it.'*

Ember glanced down, a slight frown on her face. *'And yet... I don't know why...'*

Ember looked back up, a grin on her face as a determined glint appeared in her eyes. "Alright! Considering I'm replacing one of the people who normally wields it, I suppose it's only fair."

"Well, alright then! It's settled!" Twilight exclaimed, a smile on her face. "For a change, we'll actually go along with the baseline method."

An upbeat aura came over the group as Twilight and Rarity began discussing the specifics and what to do if things somehow went wrong. Ember watched them with a smile for a moment, then glanced out the nearby window. The moon glowing eerily in the sky. It had almost reached its peak. A nervous frown creased her face.

'Oh boy... What have I just gotten myself into?'

Legend 15.11

There was an uneasy air about everyone in the small group of three. Not far off, the Mountain of Malefor stood. The Night of Eternal Darkness was upon them once again and this time, for a change, Spyro and Cynder were going to do something different.

Sparx was currently poking his head out from behind a rock. With a frown, he looked at Spyro and Cynder.

"Are you guys *sure* about this?" Sparx asked, daring not to move.

Spyro shook his head. "We were going to have to attempt it sooner or later. Besides, I've had this...uneasy feeling the entire loop. Like, if we didn't stop Malefor right away when he escapes Convexity, the rest of this loop would end up a nightmare."

Spyro turned back to the Mountain of Malefor, a frown on his face as his eyes carried a glint of determination. *'To be completely honest, I'd rather not have attempted this until several more loops from now, but...'* He shook his head. *'The ancestors are always with us. I believe you, Ignitus. I just hope we can keep the damage from being too severe...'*

Taking a deep breath, Spyro looked up at the sky. It was almost time. The moons were almost directly over the mountain. Both Spyro and Cynder hunkered down, muscles tense as the beam of purple light shot up into the sky. Finally, the moons flashed as they reached their peak over the mountain, sending down a purple pulse. The ground began to rumble as the mountain began to crumble. Spyro narrowed his eyes. Any second now...

As the mountain collapsed in on itself, a pillar of flames echoed forth and punched out a hole through the rubble. Spyro scowled. Malefor was upon them and, like it or not, they would have to stop him now...

However, when the creature that rocketed out of the hole came into view, Spyro and Cynder could only look on with wide eyes, their mouths agape.

"At long last, I am free!" the small velveteen look-a-like of Malefor proclaimed in a squeaky voice, floating in the air as its beady black eyes scanned the world. "It is time! This world must be cleansed!"

As the demonic plushie turned back to the ground with an unmoving expression, partly due to it being sewed on, the plushie Malefor began to glow. "To me, my minions!"

Spyro could only watch on in wide-eyed horror as tons of what appeared to be plushie versions of Malefor's golems came flying out

of the same hole in the rubble. Spyro turned to Cynder, who still had a dumbfounded expression on her face. Turning back to the plushie army, Spyro's left eye began to twitch.

A demonic plushie Malefor was summoning magical plushie versions of golems in an attempt to destroy the world.

Spyro let out an exasperated groan.

(A/N: Hey everyone. More filler shenanigans for the time being and now with the *proper* proper numbering order. Yeah, as it turns out, the numberings are supposed to reflect the current chapter, which I didn't realize until a few days ago... XD;; Probably won't go back to fix the previous chapters, though, as they would take a lot of editing.

Anyways, considering the last chapter was this fic's most reviewed chapter by far, I can only take it that you guys really enjoy these fillers. So...yeah. Definitely going to be doing more of these in the future.

Just a note, though. I love getting reviews and am always happy to see what the latest feedback is, but this needs to be said. Last chapter I got a rather raunchy review that I'm still wondering if it was supposed to be a joke or not. I've long since deleted that review, but in any case, I would like to remind my viewers to please think about their review before posting it. Though our jokes can push the current T-rating a bit, I'd like to remind everyone that this is a family friendly story and would like the reviews to reflect that.

On a brighter note, though, the Spyro Loops now have their own FF.N Forum! If anyone wants to submit their own snip, but didn't want to sign up to the main site we write this on, well now's your chance. Additionally, you can also discuss it there, or talk about anything, really, as it's also a general purpose forum alongside a way people can submit their own snip.

Link is (currently) on my profile page. Additionally, it's on the first pages of the Spyro Forums list, a bit of the ways down, entitled 'Spyro Loops'. Has the same icon as the one for the current fic, so it's hard to miss. It's still a bit young at the moment, but we're slowly growing. Considering this fic manages to hold a readership of mid two hundred readers per-chapter, I hope to see a few of you there! :D

Legend 15.1: Only Sparx, folks. Only Sparx...

Classic 15.2: Super Fly Orbs are pretty great. Just saying.

Arms and Armor: Believe it or not, dragon lances *are* a thing in the Legend verse. They don't make a game appearance as far as I can remember, but they do appear in the art gallery for a few games.

Classic 15.4: IMO, Enter the Dragonfly in a nutshell. /shot

Legend 15.5: The bond between a mentor and his student is a sacred thing...even when the student gets trapped in a time loop and ends up becoming technically older than his mentor.

Classic 15.6: According to looper supplement material, there's a chance a looper can loop in as the opposite gender two percent of the time. Apparently, this does not apply if you're Classic. /shot

Legend 15.7: Really, this is what *should* happen with all the 'ancient evils' in the fanfiction archive. /shot

Fused 15.8: Ironically, I'm a cat person, *and that's all we're saying about that.* /shot

A Heart of Crystal: It's not jealousy, per se. It's just...cautious protection. [And before anyone asks, yes, Rarity and Spike *did* get married in the FiM loops. It makes more sense in context, trust me. /shot]

Legend 15.11: This originated from an inside joke. It's a tad bit funnier if you know the context behind it, but I'm hoping that the sheer absurdity of demonic magical plushie Malefor is enough to get a few giggles. XD;; /shot)

A Legend's Inner Soul (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx.)

Fused 16.1 (feat: TokoWH, AbZHz101, and UkeleleNarwhal)

Classic yawned. He wasn't sure exactly how late it was, but his counterpart had already fallen asleep. In the few hours Classic had spent working on the armor, he had learned a surprising amount about it, making great strides in his repairs. As he ran through the lines of coding, he smirked.

'I might actually be able to increase the defensive properties of this once I get done with the repairs. Besides the flinch guard, I might be able to add in something like Sparx' ability to dull hits,' he thought, index claw flicking through the air as he scrolled through the command line. Classic stretched, leaning back in his chair as his eyes drooped. He shook his head. *'Come on, Spyro, you need to stay awake. You only get oh so few precious minutes to work on this stuff when your loop parents won't bust in.'*

Classic drooped his head over the chair, taking a slight upside-down glance at his sleeping loop brother.

'Still need to teach him teleportation, too. Eh, that's something for tomorrow, I suppose,' he thought, an amused smile on his face. He paused, narrowing his eyes not a second later.

Legend was current curled up under the blankets, his body fidgeting every few seconds as he appeared to be curled up into a ball. Classic blinked.

'...oh crap,' Classic thought as he rolled out of his chair and onto his paws, eyes wide. *'Oh crap! Oh crap! Oh crap, crap, crap!'*

Classic rushed over to Legend's side, looking over the blanket to see that Legend's eyelids were held tightly shut and a toothy scowl was

on his face.

"Crap!" Classic finally exclaimed as he began to shake his loop brother. "Come on! Please don't tell me that after everything that happened you're having another nightmare!"

He rolled Legend onto his back and began to shake his head. When Legend still failed to awaken from this, Classic finally stopped and placed his paws on the bed, his left eye twitching slightly. *'Of course. On top of* everything else *, he'd* have *to be a heavy sleeper!'*

Shaking his head, he looked at the clock. *'Well, if mom didn't come bursting in here yet, she probably didn't start her patrol yet. This dream walking business really makes things complicated, though...'*

At that thought, Classic's eyes lit up. If Nina was a dream walker, he must have inherited some skills from her, and if he combined that with what Luna had taught him during the Equestria loops, walking into his brother's night terror would be a viable option. With that decided, Classic pocketed the armor once again and sat back in his bed.

Taking in a large amount of oxygen, Classic emptied his thoughts, attempting to leave his corporeal form. After a bout of silence, he felt a frigid draft and found himself looking back at his peaceful body. *'Perfect! Now, it's time to fight off some nightmares!'*

The agitated mist that surrounded Legend's head was invaded by a translucent purple form, and Classic successfully gained entry into Legend's subconscious.

Legend opened his eyes. He watched as the four pillars of Fire, Ice, Electricity, and Earth were destroyed, signifying that he had passed the test. He padded his way towards the familiar library, the doors opening still giving him a familiar sense of euphoria. Even after so many loops, the sight still took his breath away.

"The entire history of the dragon race, it's all here," he recited the familiar line. Then, after pausing for a moment, he added with a fierce smirk, "Nearly."

Then he padded his way towards a pair of familiar books, his and Cynder's. He smiled fondly at his own book for a moment before turning to Cynder's. "A darker tale? Not if I have anything to say about it."

Then he heard a loud clapping from behind him. "Wow! You managed to go an entire week without trying to kill anything!"

Legend turned, snarling at the source of the mocking praise, his own dark form.

"Want a cookie?" Legend's darkness took a brief look before saying with false disappointment, "Oh, and we were doing so well too!"

Legend took in the surroundings of the soon-to-be battlefield in silence, and his darkness smirked. "Well, at least you aren't asking anything stupid like 'What are you doing here?' or sputtering around like a moron."

"Why do you always come out in places where I can't dodge?"

"Why do you have a need to justify your violence?" Dark Spyro laughed. "Always hiding it behind a façade of protection. Face it, too long without conflict, we get edgy, abrasive. When we got here, even the thought of spending an indefinite amount of time in..."—Dark Spyro paused as if trying to hold back bile—"...peace scared us. We needed to spill blood. And there was such a convenient target making a nuisance of himself and then dragging us off to a secluded area. What an idiot!"

"You're wrong! About everything!" Legend declared.

"Oh, please." Dark Spyro sighed. "Just admit it. We're fucked up. We're a Sadist and a Masochist all in one! We gladly suffer for

others, especially if we think there's a purpose. I mean really, all it took for you to back down from Ihy was him mentioning that, by staying our course and being the World Tree's Whipping Boy, we're helping speed up the repairs? And what if they never get done? What then? But, whatever, I'm sure Cynder—"

Whatever Dark Spyro was going to say next, Legend didn't let him. He lashed out at his darkness and the fight began.

Classic flew in, performing a small loop before making his landing in what appeared to be an ancient library full of scrolls. "Interesting. I didn't realize Ro was *that* into books."

His inspection was cut short, however, just as he laid eyes on a shelf that held a book with Cynder's name on it. A loud crash resounded from the nearby hallway and Classic sped toward the corridor, witnessing a very strange sight. The dark form that Legend had assumed during their fight was actively rebelling against its owner, and Legend was beyond furious.

"Don't you see the fury and violence that you so desperately crave to inflict on me? Just give in to our bloodlust, it's just a part of who we are..." Classic heard the demon speak with a sickly sweet air.

Having none of this, Legend continued to trade blows with his dark form. "There is no 'we'! You are a burden to me and it would be my pleasure to purge you from my body!"

"Is that what you truly think of me? Words hurt, you know."

Classic had had enough of this little show. He stood up on his hind legs. "HEY! You leave my brother alone, you faker!"

Both dragons turned in complete confusion. Dark Spyro took the first opportunity to break the stillness, addressing Legend as he did so. "How cute, you summoned your 'brother' to fight your battles." The shady demon looked back toward the intruder. "Ah, Classic, the

suicidal idiot! We're already in a secluded location, want to see if the third time really is the charm? Your brother would love to pull the true dragon out of you, isn't that right?" Legend bared his fangs at his twisted look-a-like. "If that isn't what you want, do us a favor and get lost."

"I don't know who or what you are, but you copied my charming looks to make my bro miserable last nightmare, and I will not stand for it." Classic then pointed his words toward his brother. "Ro! Get in a good position, we're going to let this punk know what he's messing with!"

Legend snapped out of his stupor, getting into an advantageous location in the hallway, and noticed that something was off about the sudden appearance of his brother. "Thanks, Spy. But how did you get here?"

"I have my ways. Now, you do your thing and I do my thing. That stupid copy won't know what hit him." At this, both brothers smirked.

The pitch-black dragon spoke up, trying to keep himself from upchucking at this display of fraternity. "So, I take it that you wish to take me on two-on-one? Where's your sense of honor?"

"Don't speak to me about honor, you worthless ingrate." Legend's confidence grew as he saw his brother standing at the opposite side. "The only reason why you exist in me is because of an accident with the Celestial Alignment. You should be grateful that I haven't found a way to rid myself of you, and therefore you should listen very carefully when I tell you to leave me be."

Growling at this denial of authority, the dark form revolved so that its flanks faced both Spyros, anticipating a move from either side. Dark Spyro didn't have to wait long before he was restricted by a field of telekinesis, initiated by Classic. He was surprised by the apparent rise in his mana capacity, and reasoned that dreams were probably more lax on bodily limitations. With a worried glance, Classic hoped that Legend would catch on to this himself. Otherwise there would be

some explaining to do when Legend asked how he got inside his mind.

Meanwhile, Legend busied himself with pummeling his dark counterpart to a pulp. As his limbs shot forward like missiles, Legend noticed that he was barely breaking a sweat. Normally, if he were throwing strikes this rapidly, he would have run out of breath by now.

Dark Spyro took advantage of Legend's break in the suspension of disbelief, and caused him to succumb to his self-imposed restrictions. Legend dropped to the floor in fatigue and the shady lizard broke free from the psychic cage that Classic had imposed on him. Panting from the recent onslaught, Dark Spyro lifted Legend off the floor with a vice grip on his throat, a wicked sneer painted on his face. "You say you own me? Don't make me laugh. I am you in every sense of the word. You? You're just a fragile mask that desperately latches onto my face."

Classic saw Legend freeze up in pure terror, unable to scream due to the clenched paws on his throat. It was at that moment that the dream walker knew what he had to do. "Ro! It's just a dream! None of this is actually happening!"

The dark dragon spun around and gritted his teeth in fury and fear while he kept Legend in his now weakening hold. Continuing to deconstruct the nightmare, Classic yelled at the top of his lungs, "This monster has no power over you! Don't let it lead you to believe otherwise! That's what it wants you to think! By letting yourself believe its lies, you're just giving it control!"

Dark Spyro floundered to regain control over the dream. "LIES! How do we know that you aren't just a figment of this whelp's imagination?"

Classic closed his eyes and exposed the truth to his brother. "I walked into your dream, Ro, just like how Mom does it. I had this ability before but it's stronger now, since I inherit the skill from her now."

Arms dropping to his sides, Dark Spyro shuddered at his now inevitable defeat. Legend was released and, instead of lashing out the dragon beside him, he stepped toward his brother. "You walked into my dream? You saw things that should be known to me and only me."

"I'm sorry, bro. But I couldn't let Mom walk into this nightmare. She would flip, and we would have to hide from the government and everything. I don't want that for you. I don't want that for us."

Understanding his brother's intrusion of privacy, Legend asked, "Did you look in Cynder's book?"

Shaking his head, Classic assured his brother, "I saw it, but then I heard you fighting in the hallway."

As the two dragons struggled to continue their awkward conversation, they noticed Dark Spyro slinking away, aware of what was in store for him. Legend raised a concrete wall to cut off the dark dragon, now fully aware that he was dreaming. "We'll discuss this later. For now, my dark form will soon know his place."

A scowl creased Dark Spyro's visage, his unnaturally white eyes glaring daggers at the two dragons. "You think me a form? Please. I'm not merely a form. I *am* you. The *real* you. How long will it take for you to finally grasp this?"

Legend narrowed his eyes, getting down into a fighting stance. As Classic did the same, he looked over to his brother. "Listen, Ro. This is *your* dream. *You* have control here."

Classic was quickly interrupted by a dark laugh. Turning his head back to Dark Spyro, he saw the dark, twisted form of Legend's giving a grin that showed nearly every fang he had. Classic narrowed his eyes, a scowl on his face.

"What's so funny!?" Classic demanded, a puff of smoke escaping his nostrils.

"Oh, I just found it hilarious how quick you were to forget that I'm *also* a part of that idiot over there. No matter how much he tries to deny it," Dark Spyro said, narrowing his eyes as he gave a sadistic grin. "That means *I* can *also* control this place!"

With that, the room started to get dark and the air became cold. From the shadows on the ground, an entire mob of apes began to rise. Legend growled, narrowing his eyes. Classic quickly looked over to his brother.

"If he's going to try and call in reinforcements, then I think it's time for some cavalry ourselves!" Classic said, giving a smirk.

Legend gave a nod as he closed his eyes and began to concentrate. A few seconds later, five pillars of light flashed, and the guardians and the Chronicler blinked into existence. Seeing this sight, Dark Spyro gave a sadistic, distorted laugh.

"Really? Is that the best you can come up with?" Dark Spyro asked. "Four has-beens who couldn't defend themselves from an eight-year-old and needed the aid of a child to rescue them, and a hermetic librarian who probably hasn't fought anything more terrifying than a bookworm since the day he hatched?" Dark Spyro straightened himself as he crossed his forelegs. "With a front like that, it's no wonder Malefor went unchallenged for centuries."

"Well, it's a good thing your forces don't even match up to that of a six-year-old," Legend spat back, narrowing his eyes. "The guardians may have had some bad luck, but that still doesn't change the fact that, even now, despite the many loops I've been through, they possess powers I've only ever glimpsed and dare not even try to wield." A grin crept onto his face. "In here though, in my dreamscape, I suppose that wouldn't really be an issue now, would it?"

The dream version of the Chronicler stepped forth, shaking his head at the black-scaled dragon's naivety.

"While it is true that I am merely 'a hermetic librarian who has never fought anything more terrifying than a horde of bookworms and dustbunnies,' as you so drolly put it," he said, a stern expression on his face, "I think you've forgotten one thing. This place that you are oh-so-casually defiling...is *mine* . I have had ten generations to learn from the vast tomes within these hollowed walls and just as much time to perfect my skill." He growled lowly, hunkering down. "I grasp concepts that you cannot even *fathom* ."

The air began to crackle in a way that Classic recognized... *Magic!* Somehow, his facsimile was using magic!

"Be gone from this place, cretin!"

A bright light engulfed the surrounding area and Dark Spyro was forced to close his eyes as a searing pain surrounded him, the sound of apes howling in agony echoing out around him. As the pain and light began to subside, Dark Spyro struggled to stand as he saw his army had diminished to nothing. Legend stood across from him, a smug grin on his face as the combined front of the guardians, Classic, and the Chronicler stood beside him. Dark Spyro growled.

"You think it'll be that easy?" Dark Spyro said with a scowl that bared far too many fangs than any dragon should ever have. He took a deep breath and stood upright. "Fine then. If you are so unwilling to accept who you really are, then I guess it is my job to show you just how *fucked up* you really are."

With that, a dark portal began to form behind him. Dark Spyro backed towards it, a sadistic grin on his face. "If you truly wish to fight me, then go ahead and follow me." Dark Spyro turned towards the portal, but not without one last glance towards Legend. "That is, *if you dare.* "

With that, he jumped through the portal. Classic stood still for a few seconds before he looked at Legend.

"Well, what are we going to do?" he asked, his body beginning to relax a bit now that the immediate danger had passed. "Really, if we wanted to, we could just say screw it and you can conjure up something peaceful until he tries to rear his ugly head again. I mean, this is obviously a trap."

Legend narrowed his eyes at the portal. "Be that as it may, I am sick of this. I'm sick of always worrying I might lose myself and slip into this accursed form. Always worrying about the damage I would cause, the beings I'd end up hurting..."

Legend's voice shook as he looked down, closing his eyes. Several seconds passed before he looked back up at the portal with a determined glint in his eyes.

"It's time I finally put a stop to this, once and for all!"

With that, Legend made his way over to the portal and Classic's face fell. All he could think of was what would happen if Nina were to jump in while they were chasing his brother's dark form across the dreamscape. Nonetheless, seeing how determined Legend was, Classic was quick to follow. The two purple dragons made their way through the portal, the guardians and the Chronicler fading away as they did.

Bright sunlight assaulted their eyes as the two dragons appeared on the other side of the portal. Legend was the first to regain focus and, when he saw the surrounding arena with the crowded stands of apes looking down on him, he scowled. He knew this place *far* too well.

As Classic opened his eyes, he looked around with wide eyes. "What the heck?" he muttered, turning to Legend. "What is this place?"

Legend turned to reply, but he was interrupted when a sharp clapping sound filled the air. Both dragons looked up towards the overlook of the arena and quickly bared their fangs at the sight.

"Well, well. Looks like you were foolish enough to follow me after all," Dark Spyro said, looking down at them pompously from what appeared to be an emperor's throne. "I don't know whether to commend you for your bravery or laugh at you for your idiocy."

Legend was the first to react, flying upwards with claws bared. Just as he was about to fly out of the arena, however, he was stopped abruptly by a purple dome that formed around it.

Dark Spyro laughed, a sadistic smirk on his face as he rested his head against his paw. "What entertainment would it be if you took the most direct approach? These people here paid good money to see you suffer over and over again, so it'd be a shame not to give it to them, now wouldn't it?"

With that, Dark Spyro snapped his claws. From inside the arena, two dark shadows began to form into the shape of two large scorpion creatures. Classic hunkered down, a smirk on his face.

"No problem! This'll be easy!" he proclaimed before charging at the two beings.

Legend's eyes went wide as he flew after him. "No! Wait!"

Classic paid no heed to the warning as he charged in with horns blazing. He went to ram into one of the scorpion creatures, but the scorpion held its claws in front of its face. Classic smacked into the claws and staggered back from the impact. Seeing that it did little to no damage, he narrowed his eyes. The scorpion went to stab at Classic with its stinger, and Classic barely dodged to the side. Taking a deep breath, he let out a burst of flames. The scorpion held its claw in front of itself again and the flames harmlessly bounced off its outer shell.

Classic growled, baring his fangs. He was just about to open his subspace to pull out a super-charge orb, when a shadow loomed over him. Glancing back, Classic's eyes went wide and his mouth dropped. The second scorpion had snuck up behind him and was

about to bring its stinger down. Just as it did, Classic was caught by Legend and the two tumbled out of the way.

As they rolled to a stop, Legend was the first to get to his paws. Looking down at Classic, who was currently trying to shake the daze off, he narrowed his eyes.

"You can't just go charging in haphazardly against these things," Legend said, looking back at the two scorpions. "You need to break their stance first, then quickly follow up with a powerful blow."

Classic looked up at Legend with wide eyes and Legend nodded in response.

"Watch me, then follow my lead." With that, Legend charged at one of the scorpions.

The scorpion went to stab at Legend with its stinger, but Legend rolled to the side. He got to his paws as quick as possible and continued the charge. The scorpion was quick to hold its claws in front of its face, much like it had for Classic, but Legend was no less deterred. Lowering his head, he positioned his horns under the scorpion's claws and, in one swift manoeuvre, rose upward, causing the scorpion to stagger back as its claws went flailing. In this brief window of opportunity, Legend formed a spiky mace around his tail using the earth element and slammed the scorpion hard in the face with it. The scorpion went tumbling back before disappearing in a puff of smoke.

Legend looked back at Classic and gave him a nod, which snapped Classic out of his momentary daze. Narrowing his eyes as he gave a smirk, Classic joined the battle once again.

From atop the arena, Dark Spyro watched on with an amused expression, summoning more and more scorpions and spectres every time one was destroyed.

"It's enraging, isn't it?" Dark Spyro asked, sitting up straight. "Being forced to go through all this all over again because of some unseen force."

Legend shook his head, trying his best to keep focus on the enemies in front of him. Dark Spyro gave a sadistic grin, getting out of his chair and walking towards the edge of the stand.

"Whose to say the same won't happen again once the loop breaks?" Dark Spyro asked, looking down with narrowed eyes. "Whose to say some other unforeseen force won't put you through some other kind of hell? Whose to say there aren't beings in this world worse than Malefor lurking around?"

Legend growled, knocking down a shadow ape before he turned to his dark counterpart, his eyes narrowing at its shadowy glow.

"Then I'll just stand up and face it like I always do!" Legend spat, quickly dodging a club to the face and retaliating with a tail strike. "It's my duty as a purple dragon to protect this world no matter what!"

At this, Dark Spyro scoffed. "Oh, yes. To be a perfect little hero. To be that 'pillar of strength' to such a broken world. To support it when it would be much easier to watch it fall..." Dark Spyro said, beginning to pace back and forth, never taking his eyes off Legend.

"How long will you keep up that creed? How long before you eventually snap from some unforeseen force putting you through psychologically breaking 'adventure' after 'adventure', to never have the eternal peace you try oh so hard to strive for?"

Legend let out a low growl, glaring at his dark counterpart up in the stands. In this momentary lapse, he felt a sharp pain to his chest as an ape punched him with a strong right hook. Legend went tumbling back, coming to an abrupt stop against the arena wall. Dark Spyro gave a sadistic grin as he watched Legend struggle to pick himself up.

"Just like the people watching in the arena now, the Admins have been watching the entire time. Should we win, they will nod and say that it is expected and just. Should we lose, they will bemoan the terrible twist ending but do nothing to change the outcome. What loyalty should be owed to ones such as they? Those who care not. Why should we care for them? Their love is fickle and fleeting, why do we desire it?"

Legend held his claws over his ears, his eyes shut tight. Dark Spyro smirked as he watched Legend shake his head from side to side, jeers roaring from the crowd. His shadow beasts began to glow a dark purple as more began to form into existence. Legend got to his paws, looking towards the approaching mob with a scowl. Hunkering down, his muscles tensed up. Dark Spyro scoffed.

"Now are you beginning to see how pointless this is? How much easier it would be just to watch the world burn?" Dark Spyro asked. "Malefor realized that early on, and who knows? Maybe it's a realization all purple dragons come to. It's only a matter of time before you come to your—"

Dark Spyro's ranting was cut off when a lightning bolt struck down from above him. He rolled out of the way, his eyes darting over to the other purple dragon who stood with a defiant smirk.

" *Hello?* Don't tell me you forgot I'm here too!" Classic mocked, hunkering down as he turned to Legend. "Don't listen to him! He's just trying to get in your head!" Classic rushed over to him. "The more he manages to demoralize you, the more powerful he gets!"

Dark Spyro scoffed, looking towards Classic with a sadistic smirk. "Please. As if he had a chance in the first place. He is nothing more than a shell of me in denial. Sooner or later, he will realize the truth of my words."

"Oh really?" Classic said, quickly sliding in between Legend and the shadow monsters while giving a defiant smirk. "And who says he's doing this for the fame?"

"As if you're the one to talk, little Mr Hero," Dark Spyro spat, narrowing his eyes at Classic.

Classic scowled. "Okay, so maybe I do enjoy playing the hero. But really, what's wrong with being happy because you do the right thing? I can't claim to speak for Ro, but during my adventures I've met some of my best friends and I know they'll stand by my side no matter what. And while I can't say it for sure..." he trailed off, looking at Legend. "I bet the same holds true for him. We're not saving the world for the approval of people we might never meet, we're doing it because we care about the people who are living in the same world we are!"

"Even if he's always being put through adventures that he'd rather not go through, that doesn't mean he's alone," Classic continued, a smirk on his face. "From what I've seen of the loopers from his world, they're all willing to stand by him no matter what. While I can't say I approve of certain *relationships* between them..." Classic shook his head, "...that just goes to show how my bro here will never be on his own."

Classic gave a grin. "Heck, if his adventures get too bad, I'll have the Professor of my world figure out a way to get to his world so I can help him out!"

Classic turned to Legend, the smirk still on his face as he held out his paw. Legend paused as he took in what Classic had said. A slight smile appeared on his face. He took Classic's paw and stood up straight. The shadow beasts shuddered, beginning to lose their area as they began backing away. Legend took the lead, glancing back at Classic for a second.

"Thanks," he said, before looking back at the shadow beasts.

Classic shook his head, giving a grin.

The two dragons turned back towards the shadow beasts, the crowd now beginning to cheer for a completely different reason. Dark Spyro

scowled as he watched the two purple dragons charge forth. He shook his head.

"No matter," he said, opening up a portal. "This is just one of the many things wrong with this shell. The next one won't be so easy to refute." With that, Dark Spyro jumped through the portal.

As the last of the shadow beasts were dispatched, the crowd cheered at their victory and both Spyros were quick to fly up towards where Dark Spyro had been watching. Landing down and seeing the portal in front of them, Classic glanced over to Legend. He nodded, looking to the portal with a determined glint in his eyes. Classic gave a smirk and they darted through.

As they came out on the other side, the two Spyros skidded to a stop. Legend took a moment to shake his head, regaining his composure as he began to look around. When he recognized the ancient stone architecture of the temples around him, his eyes widened.

"Warfang? Why did he send us here?" he asked out loud, not to anyone in particular.

"Well, considering this looks like something out of the medieval times, which probably means it's from your world, you tell me," Classic said, clutching a paw to his head as he looked around.

Legend glanced around as he took in the familiar surroundings. They appeared to be on the outskirts of the city. Legend narrowed his eyes and let out a breathless exhale.

"Something's not right, though..." he said, turning to Classic. "It looks almost the same and yet something feels... *off* ."

Suddenly, the ground shook and both purple dragons struggled to keep their balance. Legend's head darted around as he tried to figure out what was going on. Finally, on the horizon appeared a

sight that made his jaw drop. What to be a moving plain quickly revealed itself to be a massive army of apes, far larger than anything Malefor had thrown at him before. Classic's eyes went wide and he staggered back, struggling to say anything.

"You know, I'm all for kicking bad guy butt, but when *I* know it would be a better idea to run..." Classic finally said, turning his head towards Legend.

Legend's eyes were still wide as he stood frozen in place. With all his vast years of looping experience, he could easily take on a mob of apes no problem, but this was far more than anything he was used to. He shook his head, desperately trying to regain his composure. As he glanced around, though, his pupils shrank as he finally realized why this version of Warfang was strange.

This Warfang possessed no protective wall to keep an army out.

Legend began to breathe heavily as this realization sunk in. As what appeared to be three armies mashed together on the horizon grew closer, a cold air washed over the two dragons.

"What's the matter?" an icy cold voice rang out.

Classic spun around, seeing Dark Spyro standing not far off. Classic hunkered down, a scowl on his face, but Legend's eyes were still locked on the approaching army, his mouth agape. Dark Spyro smirked.

"Come on, me. All the people of Warfang will die if you don't do something! They're counting on you!" he exclaimed sarcastically. "It's not like they could ever do anything without us! Hell, I'm surprised they can clean up after themselves without us handing them the rag!"

Then he turned to Classic. "And you, brother dear, have no ground to stand on! You're just as bad! Would it be so wrong to let those fools sort out their own problems for once? Weren't all the dragons

turned to crystal because they, unprovoked, started insulting the guy who did it? Let 'em stew in there for all eternity!"

"And how the heck were they supposed to know that!?" Classic spat, hunkering down with a scowl on his face. "Besides, I chose to help them!"

"Oh, gee. This tired argument again?" Dark Spyro taunted, lazily rolling his eyes. "I thought I already made this clear last time. You didn't choose to go on any of your adventures. You were roped into them because the beings of the world were too incompetent and needed the help of a child to sort out their mess."

As the verbal fight between Classic and Dark Spyro continued, Legend could only blink, his eyes glued on the approaching onslaught. Classic looked back at Legend before turning back to Dark Spyro with a scowl, letting out a low growl.

"Oh? Did I hit a sore spot? And exactly what do you intend to do about that?" Dark Spyro taunted, a smug look about him. "You only barely managed to survive our last battle, and that was with your pathetic friends helping you out."

Classic growled and shook his head. *'Gah, there's no use trying to fight him. Doing that isn't going to stop the army heading our way!'* He turned to the nearly catatonic Legend. "Hey, remember! This is a dream! This isn't really happening!"

"And that makes a difference?" asked Dark Spyro, beginning to pace around the two dragons. "I mean, if he can't stop it in his own dreams, how will he be able to do so in the real world where people ask him to perform miracles like that on a daily basis? Hell, thanks to these loops, what's stopping something *worse* from popping up? Something even more bullshit than what's being presented to us right now, that we have no choice but to attempt to stop despite the blatant impossibility of it?"

Classic looked back with a sharp glare, baring his fangs, but Dark Spyro didn't even flinch. Classic shook his head, unmoving as he stared down his dark counterpart. Dark Spyro stood with relaxed posture, a smirk on his face. Several crucial seconds passed...and Classic smirked. Not a second later, he began to chuckle. Dark Spyro raised an eyebrow.

"What's wrong?" Dark Spyro asked in a sarcastic manner, narrowing his eyes. "Has realizing the truth finally driven you mad?"

Classic shook his head, looking up with a confident grin. "No, no," he said, his voice condescending now. "I'm just surprised that, with all your attempts to demoralize us, you forgot one little fact."

"Oh? And what would that be?" Dark Spyro spat.

Classic smirked, turning to Legend, who was still staring motionless at the oncoming army. Classic raced in front of him, getting between him and the approaching sight on the horizon.

"You're forgetting that my bro here is a lot more powerful than he was in the baseline!" Classic said, giving Legend a smirk. "You said it yourself. The only one who's capable of giving you challenge in your baseline anymore is that Malefor guy, right?"

Legend jumped back, blinking as he stared at Classic. "Well, yeah, but—"

"No buts," Classic said, shaking his head. "You said it yourself. You can easily tear your way through that guy's army like they were nothing now, right?"

"Well, yes, but never this many at once!" Legend said, glancing over Classic's shoulder at the approaching army.

"Then I'll help you! I promised that only a few moments ago, remember?" Classic said. "Listen, the point I'm trying to make is, from what you've told me, you've been through *far* worse! Heck, you

managed to survive the apocalypse by pulling your planet back together!"

Classic looked back towards the approaching army before turning back to Legend, who was looking on with wide eyes.

"You get what I'm trying to say, right?" Classic said, placing his paws on Legend's shoulders. "The point I'm trying to make is, after what you've been through in baseline, you don't have to worry about being asked to do the impossible, because there's nothing that can be thrown at you that can't be handled!" Classic sat back on his hind legs. "And if you ever feel like you're being overwhelmed, don't worry. Even if I'm not there, you still have your friends in your world to help you out!"

"Hey, what about those old dudes that you called up earlier? Couldn't they help?" Classic asked.

Dark Spyro began to smirk. "I don't think the guardians will be of much help right now," he said, nodding to another point outside the city where Cyril, Terrador, Ignitus and Volteer were doing battle with the Golem that had pursued Spyro and Cynder from the catacombs to Warfang. "And as for the Chonicler... Well, if that old windbag ever leaves his library, he'd probably turn to dust at the first breeze."

Then he turned back to Legend. "Come on, it'll be easy. Just let them sort out their own problems—just this once! I mean, this is just a dream, right? It's not like anyone's actually going to get hurt or anything. All you have to do is wait," he said with a laugh. "Just do nothing, like you've been doing. It's that easy!"

Classic gritted his teeth as Legend fidgeted. They both knew that if Legend actually chose to stand aside now, it would be that much harder not to do it again later, especially due to the resetting nature of the loops.

"Gah!" Classic exclaimed. "Just do something, Ro!"

"What?" Legend snapped back. "What should I do, Spy? I can't take down that many enemies at once! At least not before they enter the city and slaughter its inhabitants! As long as Warfang has no wall, it's impossible!"

"Then make one!" Classic retorted without thinking.

Legend was taken aback, his eyes wide. Judging from Classic's wide eyes and heavy breathing, it was clear that his remark had come from desperation. Legend blinked. *'Make a wall...?'*

"...That's it!"

Before Classic could say anything, Legend was already off into the air, pushing his wings as fast as he could go. Coming to a hover above Warfang, he saw the army not far off now. He bit his lip, beads of sweat beginning to form on his head, but he quickly shook it, a determined glint in his eyes.

'I pulled the planet back together. Several times now, in fact!' Legend thought, a faint green glow beginning to illuminate from him as he pulled his paws together. *'Come on now! Compared to that, this should be youngling's play!'*

Dark Spyro looked up at the sight with an amused expression. "This should be good."

Legend let out a growl as he began to concentrate, eyes tightly closed as he curled into a ball, his green aura glowing brighter by the second. As Dark Spyro looked on with amusement, the ground began to shake. His eyes widened as his head began darting back and forth before he finally rested his eyes on Legend.

"No way!" Dark Spyro exclaimed, hunkering down as he spread his wings. "There's no way you can pull this off, damn it! I won't allow it!"

Dark Spyro darted into the air with claws bared. As he got closer to Legend, he was suddenly cut off by a bolt of electricity. Dark Spyro

fell back in the air as several more bolts headed his way. He growled, eyes darting towards the ground. From below, Classic smirked, his eyes glowing faintly as another bolt of lightning struck the dark dragon in the back, directly between his wings. Dark Spyro cringed, his wings freezing up as volts of electricity pulsed through him. Without the use of his wings, he plummeted to the ground.

As this happened, Legend continued to focus his energy, the green aura around him growing brighter by the second. Finally, Legend opened his eyes, focused and determined as he lifted his forelegs. The ground shook violently with a thunderous crumbling sound. Finally, the ground around Warfang began to rise, forming a thick earth wall around the city, stretching for a good few miles as Legend summoned every bit of strength he had. As the wall's construction came to a stop, Legend began to pant. He shook his head, narrowing his eyes.

Not done yet, Legend brought his forelegs down and the ground before the wall started to give way, forming a massive trench. Finally, Legend looked outward as he took a few deep breaths. The army had stopped in their tracks, frozen at the sight of the newly constructed fortifications. Legend gave a small smirk, seeing a few beginning to back away. Not a second later, the army began to disperse in a dark cloud. With that, Legend breathed a sigh of relief and his wings finally gave out.

As Legend began to fall, Classic charged forward. Summoning forth a mini-whirlwind, he slowed Legend's descent as he came to rest on the ground. Legend struggled to get to his feet, shaking his head as he finally regained balance. Looking up, he smiled. Classic gave a smirk in response.

A low growling sound pierced the scene and both dragons turned their head to see Dark Spyro looking at them with a toothy scowl. Classic grinned.

"Hey, just saying, the score is two to zero now," he taunted. "Give up yet?"

Dark Spyro said nothing. Instead, a dark portal opened up behind him and he jumped through it.

Classic turned to Legend, still grinning. "Looks like he's starting to run out of ideas."

"That...or he's getting desperate," Legend said between pants. "We should be careful. After this, there's no telling what he'll throw at us next."

Classic gave a nod before turning towards the portal. Taking one last deep breath to gather any lost energy inside him, he headed towards the portal, Legend in tow.

The air was thick as Legend's surroundings started to come into view. The area around him was dark, but he recognized the ancient corridors and architecture right away.

"The dragon temple...?" he muttered, slowly beginning to walk down the corridor he was in.

Not far off, he could see the room housing the pool of visions, and not far beyond that was the training room where he had learned to use the four elements. He blinked.

'Why would Dark send me here...?' he thought, cautiously making his way towards the pool of visions. *'Exactly what could be here that he could use against me...?'*

Legend paused before he began to look around. His eyes went wide as his head started darting back and forth.

"Spy!? Spy, where are you!?" Legend called, quickly darting down the corridor as he entered the room with the pool of visions. Glancing around and seeing no one there, he headed towards the training room.

"Spy!" he called, looking around at the large empty room.

"It's funny how you pretend to care for that whelp."

Legend spun around, his eyes narrowed and fangs bared as he saw Dark Spyro walk out of the shadows. He growled.

"What did you do to him!?" Legend demanded, hunkering down.

"Me? I didn't do anything to Classic," Dark Spyro said, his voice carrying a large amount of a venom at the mention of Classic's nickname. "I can assure you, he's perfectly safe. Though, why it concerns you, I have no idea."

"Where is he!?"

Dark Spyro rolled his eyes, a scowl on his face as he shook his head. "Fine." He sighed, beginning to walk around Legend. "If you must know, just look behind you."

Legend scowled, unwilling to take his eyes off Dark Spyro for a second. Dark Spyro gave an annoyed glance before he began walking towards the balcony. As he got towards the alcove leading to it, he motioned for Legend to follow. Legend growled, doing so as he made sure to keep a good distance behind. As the two dragons headed onto the balcony, Legend was quick to note the one key difference between the real temple and this dream version of it.

Around the temple, a translucent dome with a purple tint stood firm. Legend paused, glancing around at it with wide eyes. Dark Spyro merely gave him an indifferent glance before heading to the edge of the balcony.

"Are you just going to stand in amazement, or do you really not care about your supposed *brother* after all?" Dark asked, his voice seething with venom as he mentioned the word 'brother.'

Legend paused, narrowing his eyes at Dark Spyro, who began to back away from the balcony, motioning for Legend to take a look. Cautiously, he began to head towards the balcony's edge, never taking his eyes off Dark for a second. Once he was at the edge, he dared to take a glance down before quickly looking back at his dark counterpart. Not a second later, though, he gasped and glanced down again.

Outside the dome stood several different beings, all of which Legend was quick to recognize from his adventures. He could see the guardians sans Ignitus, his Hunter, the Chronicler, and several of the people he had rescued during his adventures. Most importantly, though, he saw Classic standing outside the barrier, desperately trying to get in as he rammed against the dome's surface with all his might. Legend scowled, quickly turning to Dark Spyro.

"What did you do!?" he demanded, hunkering down into attack position.

Dark Spyro gave a nonchalant shrug. "I didn't do anything. The reason this dome exists is your own fault." He walked back towards the temple as he glanced to the sky. "Always keeping your guard up, refusing to get close to anyone, even when they try to become close to you."

Legend narrowed his eyes, growling. Dark Spyro huffed, glancing back for a second before he flew back into the temple's training area. Legend spread his wings, quick to chase after him.

Legend landed on the ground in the training area, already hunkering down as he glared at Dark Spyro. The two dragons stood apart, neither one making a move. Classic was trapped outside the temple and Dark Spyro said it was his fault. Legend shook his head.

'This has to be his doing,' Legend thought, keeping his gazed fixed on his dark counterpart. *'I can't let him get to me. He nearly did that the last two times, and now Spy isn't here to snap me out of it. I can't*

believe anything he says. I need to figure out how he set up this dome to separate us, and then tear it down as quick as possible.'

Dark Spyro chuckled. Legend raised an eyebrow at this.

"I said it before. I had nothing to do with this dome."

Legend's eyes went wide before he quickly shook his head. *'What? How did he...? He can't read my thoughts, can he!?'*

Dark Spyro shook his head, turning towards Legend with a flat expression. "Why do you insist on denying me?"

Legend didn't hesitate to snap in response. "I know better than to let you take control! You're the reason why my brother and I had to go to great lengths to deceive our parents!" Legend bristled, resisting the urge to attack so he could finish his argument. "If you didn't exist, I wouldn't have been burned alive and Spy wouldn't have been wounded at my claws!"

Dark Spyro rolled his eyes. "True, true. If I weren't there to force your paw, I wouldn't have seen the true extent of his powers, and my own."

Legend growled, beginning to bare his fangs. "This body is mine! You have no right to use it for your twisted purposes and you have no right to call the gifts of a purple dragon your own!" Legend's voice became dangerously low as his body twitched in anticipation. "You only exist because of a freak accident with the Celestial Alignment! You're an illness, and I will find a cure!"

Dark Spyro slowly moved closer to his counterpart, growling. "Well then, you'll be looking for that cure for eternity. You know why, don't you?"

Legend merely glowered in response.

"I *am* you," Dark Spyro said coldly, stopping inches away from Legend. "I am what you hide under that perfect hero mask, beneath the valiant whelp that rises to whatever task is laid before him. You call me an illness, but you refuse to realize that your entire personality is artificial. To be completely honest, you're nothing more than a mask that hides me."

This was his last word before Legend lunged forward to pin Dark Spyro. Even though the dark dragon failed to dodge this, he retaliated by throwing his claws at Legend's face, forcing him to bend backwards to avoid the sharp weapons. Seeing that Legend was leaving his torso open, Dark Spyro drove his hind paw into his gut, forcing him off of his body. Both rolled back into upright stances and proceeded to circle each other, watching for any sudden moves.

Finally, Legend spoke up, glaring at his counterpart. "You say I'm a mask, correct?"

Dark Spyro narrowed his eyes. "That is true."

"Well, if I'm a mask, then I can be pulled off whenever you want. You shouldn't have to wait until I'm in some vulnerable state," Legend said coldly. "If I'm just a mask, how do I manage to be with my brother without losing control and attacking him, like what happened at the park? You did want to bring the 'true dragon' out of him, right?"

The dark dragon shook his head, giving a low growl. "Really? Fine, if you want to go this route, why is it that the oh so knowledgeable Chronicler and the Guardians have never diagnosed me as a disease? They never told you that I'm a foreign contaminant of some sort. All they say is that I'm the darkness within you. How am I an illness, then?"

"You didn't answer my question," Legend retorted flatly.

The dark dragon held his unimpressed expression. "You didn't answer mine, either."

Legend narrowed his eyes and growled, baring his fangs. "What is this dome? How are you doing this?"

Dark Spyro huffed. "I already told you. This dome is your own doing."

"And what makes you think I'm going to believe that!?" Legend spat, muscles tightening. "Everything you've said so far has been nothing but an attempt to demoralize me, a sick and twisted version of my own psyche. Every time you've tried to use something against me, I've managed to prove you wrong. So how about we just cut the crap, because it isn't going to work!"

Dark Spyro smirked, hunkering down. "So, you admit everything you've been shown so far is a part of your psyche?"

Legend jerked, his eyes going wide. He quickly hunkered back down, fangs bared. "That's not what I meant!"

"Tsk, tsk," Dark Spyro said, beginning to circle around his counterpart. "The mask is starting to slip. You know it, don't you? That what I say is true."

"Shut up! Just tell me how to get rid of this stupid dome!"

"Why are you so insistent on humoring that whelp?" Dark Spyro asked, pausing in his tracks. "He's nothing but an annoying kid who doesn't deserve the right to be called a purple dragon!"

"Spy... Spy may have been that way at first, but deep down he's a good dragon," Legend said, casting a sharp glare at Dark Spyro.

"Really?" Dark Spyro asked sarcastically, narrowing his eyes. "If he's such a good dragon, how come you refuse to let him into this temple? How come he's stuck out there with the other common riffraff?" He smirked, his soulless white eyes looking at his counterpart coldly. "Despite how annoying he may be, I do have to appreciate that he shares the same goal as I. All he wants is to tear that mask off, to finally let the real us out..."

"Shut up! You are not the real me!" Legend snapped, fangs bared as he got ready to pounce.

"Oh really now?" Dark Spyro asked, baring his fangs in turn. "Then tell me something. That whelp insists on calling us his brother, despite the fact that he is nothing more than an idiot who lucked into his spot as a *hero* . If you aren't us, then tell me... Can you look me directly in the eyes and honestly refer to that moron as your brother?"

Legend let out a low growl, scowling at his dark counterpart, standing firm. Several seconds passed before a smirk creased Dark Spyro's face.

"I thought so," Dark Spyro said as he began to circle around Legend again. "Really, the only dragons you let yourself get close to are Ignitus and Cynder, and even then..."

Dark Spyro grinned as two dragons came into view on the balcony. Ignitus and Cynder appeared there, both of them looking on mournfully. Cynder raised a claw, placing her paw on what appeared to be an invisible barrier in the archway. Legend looked back with wide eyes before he glared back at Dark with a loud growl.

Dark Spyro shook himself before speaking again. "You know, I can't be really surprised, though, that you let Ignitus and Cynder in," he said with a chuckle. "I mean, Ignitus. We met him before all the danger had really sunk in, and he was like us..." His words dripped with a false enthusiasm, only a slight hitch in his voice. "We didn't know what we were, but he was just like us, only bigger! And even though we loved Flash dearly for raising us even though we were apparently different, here was someone who could have been our actual dad!"

Dark Spyro's words briefly hit a higher pitch, but his tone quickly dropped as he shifted to a near whisper. "He said that we were special, and he was just full of praise and he knew about fire, which we had just found out about. I mean, it was almost too perfect! How

could we not adore him? How could we not just want to make him happy? Even though he was so damn needy."

Dark Spyro then began to poorly imitate Ignitus's voice, a slight spasm going through his stomach. "Spyro, go to this incredibly dangerous place because my friend there, he's been tanked for long enough and I really do need him back." Dark Spyro smirked as Legend snarled. "But he was so proud of us whenever we'd do it. I mean, really, we'd probably have gladly slit our own throats."

"And Cynder... Man, Cynder," Dark Spyro continued, dodging a lunge. "Hormones through and through. I mean, what other reason could we have had for saving the monster—?"

" She was not a monster! *"* Legend roared, muscles tightening as he got ready to pounce again.

"Ah, but we didn't know that at the time, did we? Anyway, that beast had been attacking Sparx, Ignitus, and us, and had imprisoned the Guardians—you know, Ignitus's friends. I mean, what else could possibly have possessed us to help her?"

Legend snarled and lunged. Dark Spyro's evasion allowed him to hide the tremor in his front leg.

"And once we had her back at the temple, mm, mmm, she was ours! I mean, come on, there she was surrounded by enemies, dragons who she had tortured and left to die." Dark Spyro dodged a claw strike and replied with one of his own, using his forelimb to hide the twitch on his face. "If she so much as raised a claw to us, that was it, she was dead, and she knew it—and most importantly, we knew it. We could have made her do anything. Hell, she was probably expecting it, especially after we found out that, guess what, *there are only two dragons in our generation* . I mean it was freaking genius of us, since we didn't take it immediately, she gave it willingly!"

Dark Spyro opened his mouth, but nothing came out. Instead, it was snapped shut when a pillar of earth jolted from the ground and

slammed him in the chin. Dark Spyro staggered back in a daze before he was sent tumbling back by a powerful blow to the chest. He was flung back towards the wall, slamming back first into it as he gasped for air. He didn't even get time to get back to his paws before another pillar shot forth from the wall, pushing him forward as the earth began to encase his body in the process.

Being brought to an abrupt stop, Dark came face to face with purple scales and a pair of glowing white eyes. Legend growled, his fangs bared and his claws digging into the ground.

"Don't you *eve r* talk about Cynder that way!" he said in an icy cold voice.

Dark Spyro looked on blankly before a grin began to crease his face. Glancing down, Dark began to chuckle before he looked back up at his counterpart.

"Finally starting to show something that resembles a genuine emotion?" Dark asked, a smug look on his face. "It's about time. No, you don't need to say anything. Your eyes say everything right now."

Legend blinked, staggering back as the glow of his eyes quickly subsided. Dark smirked, jerking his head as the pillar of earth shattered around him. Legend's eyes went wide. Dark Spyro made a quick motion of his paw and a shockwave shuddered through the ground, knocking Legend to the floor. Legend gasped as he quickly rolled to the side, barely missing having his chest gouged out. Dark scoffed, glaring as Legend got back to his paws.

"Don't tell me you forgot so soon? I *am* you!" Dark said, hunkering down. "That means your powers are *my* powers!"

Legend barely had time to duck as several sharp shards of ice were shot his way, and quickly rolled to the side to avoid a pillar of earth that shot up from the ground. Getting to his paws, Legend retaliated by sending several balls of fire Dark's way. Dark Spyro slammed his paws into the ground, bringing up a solid earth wall. Dust kicked up

as flames collided with earth, forcing Dark to close his eyes. Opening them slightly, they soon went wide as he staggered back, barely avoiding a lightning bolt.

As Dark Spyro skidded to a stop, he was hit by a pillar of flames and Legend slammed into him with a comet dash. Dark growled as he tried to dig his claws into the ground, opening his maw as an icy cold mist escaped it. A cloud of mist surrounded them as he let loose a stream of ice shards, sending them both skidding to a stop at opposite ends of the room, glaring at each other.

"You said you love Cynder, yet how much do you really know about her?" Dark asked, digging his claws into the ground. "All you know about her is that she was kidnapped as an egg and turned into a monster! Whenever we hang out with her, all we do is sit next to her, maybe cuddle a little, *at most,* despite having who knows how long anymore to get close to her!"

"You've never taken the time to find out her interests, what she's like when she's *not* moping about her *dark and troubled past* for who *knows* how many times in a row!" Dark said, tendrils of flames starting to envelope him. "Nor have you let her do the same for you, *despite* your feelings for her! *"*

Legend barely had time to dodge to the side to avoid a comet dash from Dark Spyro, but was quickly knocked to the ground as Dark swiped at his paws with his tail. Without missing a beat, Legend raised a pillar and flung himself into the air, Dark Spyro smashing through the pillar not a second later. As Legend hovered in the air, his dark counterpart looked up with a growl.

"She only said she loved us the first time because the world was crumbling around us. The damn apocalypse was at our doorstep!" Dark yelled, narrowing his eyes. "How do we know she didn't say that because she was *grateful* to us for all we've done for her!? That she only continued to go along with it once the loops started up because she was confusing *gratefulness* for love!?"

Legend's jaw hung open, his mouth moving but words refusing to come out. He looked down at his dark counterpart. Though it was hard to tell from the air, Legend could swear he could see tears forming in Dark Spyro's narrowed eyes.

"You've felt this way before, *damn it!* Don't try to deny it!" Dark Spyro proclaimed, hunkering down. "You want to get close to her! You want to reassure yourself that what the two of you feel is truly love! Yet despite all this, you've never once acted on our feelings, our *desires* to get close to her, you unfeeling, emotionless *bastard!* "

Legend didn't even have time to react before Dark Spyro was upon him, darting into the air at super speeds and slamming into him, sending them both crashing into the ceiling. Legend gasped for air before Dark Spyro grabbed him by the tail, spinning around as he threw Legend at the ground. Once again, Legend gasped for air as the wind was knocked out of him. He coughed, his eyes going wide. He was quick to roll out of the way as Dark Spyro landed where he'd been, creating a small crater from the impact.

Legend got to his paws, breathing heavily as Dark Spyro shot a sharp glare towards him and took a step forward, his dark aura flaring.

"Classic isn't here to help you this time, to put up some stupid claim so you can further delude yourself from the truth!" Dark Spyro said, seething with rage. "And even then, I doubt he would want to help you anymore if he knew the truth! The truth that, despite the fact that all he wants to do is help, his precious *brother* only views him as an annoying counterpart that shouldn't exist!"

"Face it! No matter what *anyone* does, you never let them get close to you! You may care for them, but you never let them get close to you in return, even if they all care about you deeply! You're nothing but an emotionless soldier afraid that you'll lose those you're close to, despite that being an impossibility in this endless retrogression of time!"

"But it makes sense that you don't actually trust Classic not to stab you in the back. Think about it, when has Classic ever done anything for us that wasn't for his own gain?" Dark Spyro taunted. "You knew it once. You didn't try to pretend, so why do you now? The brat will never know better!"

Legend's mind briefly flashed back to the moments after his fight with Classic, when he had been pretty much helpless on the floor of Cynder's house. He had doubted Classic's reasons then, but still... Legend took a calming breath and stood a bit straighter even as he continued to bleed from his wounds. "Because he gave me a second chance after I tried to kill him."

"Bah, he's just pretending!"

"Red," Legend stated in reply.

"And how do you know that the story's true, huh? Maybe Ember was making it up?"

Legend began to chuckle. "First, we've seen Ember try to lie. She's *cannot* lie to save her life. Second, he stood up for me against his friends. Even if I wasn't supposed to hear them, Spy defended me. And even though I now hate skateboards with a passion, none of them laughed at me once. Spy gave me a second chance, so I'm going to return the favor!"

"We don't give second chances," Dark Spyro stated flatly.

Legend shook his head. As tempting as it may have been to bring up Cynder...

"Then maybe it's time I start," Legend said, stepping forward.

Dark paused, raising an eyebrow as Legend continued to take a few steps forward. As he got closer, Dark Spyro slowly began backing away. Legend looked behind him at the dream versions of Ignitus

and Cynder. He closed his eyes, taking a deep breath before he reopened them.

"You know, never in my life did I think I'd be thanking you," Legend said, looking back at Dark Spyro.

"O-oh? And why is that?" Dark asked, continuing to back up as he hunkered down.

Legend sighed, closing his eyes. "You made me realize how much of an idiot I've been." He reopened his eyes as he glanced back at dream-Ignitus and Cynder. "You know as well as I do that our baseline isn't exactly the most peaceful one. I don't know how it started up, but I guess I started distancing myself from others out of fear of the potential pain of losing them..."

"Yet, in a world where death is no longer permanent, where we can see and save those we care about from what happened the first time around, I realize how stupid it is to push others away out of fear of losing them," Legend said. "All it's done is caused me to hurt those who care about me, and those who I care for..."

Legend glanced at dream Cynder, a smile starting to appear on her face. In turn, a smile began to make its way onto Legend's face. "But that all stops now."

Dark Spyro scowled, letting out a low growl. "Idiot! Anyone can claim anything! Acting on it is another!" he spat, digging his claws into the ground. "How do you expect to do that when you've never been around others outside of the war!?"

Legend shook his head before he glanced at Dark with an indifferent expression. "I realize that it won't be easy. I've never really interacted with anyone outside of preparing for the war or fighting in it, but that doesn't mean I shouldn't try."

Legend smirked, a renewed glint of confidence in his eyes. "And I know exactly where to start."

Dark Spyro snorted. "Good luck with that. How can you possibly do such a thing? You're too busy playing soldier." Dark Spyro began to growl. "You threw your emotions away as useless an eternity ago!"

"They might not be on hand," Legend retorted, "but they are never out of reach."

As Dark Spyro watched in utter disbelief, Legend took a steadying breath and pushed beyond a mental barrier that had quarantined his emotions. The tumult was worse than what he had expected, but Legend pushed onwards. He tethered himself to specific memories, including the skate park, the comic shop—really, that entire day—playing Dyson after their fight, and the playful back-and-forth poking and prodding between him with Classic's disdain for relationships and Classic with Legend's discomfort with the opposable digit. Legend used them as a guide rope to a specific feeling. Once there, he grasped hard and pulled it back outside of the boundary.

Coming back to himself, Legend felt that which was sometimes known as 'Philia' directed at one particular dragon. He noticed that Dark Spyro seemed almost frozen in place before he seemed to twitch and returned to life with a roar. Dark Spyro snarled, his body shaking violently. Legend could almost see smoke beginning to escape his dark counterpart's nostrils.

"I. will. *destroy.* you!" he ground out. " When I'm done with you—!"

Whatever Dark Spyro would actually have threatened or promised was lost as wing beats filled the air.

"HA!" Classic laughed as he entered the room. "Your stupid barrier couldn't keep me out! And it looks like my bro here took you down without any of my help! Score's three to nil! Have you thought about giving up yet?"

Dark Spyro snorted mirthlessly. "Yes, you got through 'my' barrier. I suggest you leave, though. This is about to get rather personal." Dark Spyro smirked as a portal formed behind him. "I'd hate for you

to be turned off by the skeletons your 'brother' has been keeping in his closet. Things he's never even told Cynder or Ignitus."

"Well, I think you're full of it!" Classic yelled back.

"Fine, fine," Dark Spyro said, jumping back into the portal. As he disappeared, his voice echoed in the chamber around Legend and Classic. "But ask yourself this... When, exactly, have I ever lied? See you soon."

Legend narrowed his eyes, his expression remaining unreadable as he looked at the portal ahead of him. Classic gave a smirk, already beginning to head towards the portal, but paused and looked back. He raised an eyebrow.

"You alright?"

"Uh, yeah," Legend said, shaking his head as he walked over to Classic. "Listen, Spy..."

Classic raised an eyebrow as Legend stopped next to him, placing a paw on his shoulder as he gave a soft smile.

"...I want to thank you for all you've done, and for continuing to help me despite everything that's going on," Legend said, closing his eyes. "Even after what happened when we first met, you were willing to forgive that and help me adjust to this new world, as well as help me begin to lighten up again. I'm not fully there yet, but..." Legend opened his eyes, taking a deep breath. "Even then, you're still willing to help me. Even with personal things like Dark Spyro."

Legend shook his head. "What I'm trying to say is...thank you, and I'm sorry if I haven't exactly been all that open about it."

Classic blinked, though he was quick to give a grin. "Hey, don't worry about it. I can understand if you aren't all that willing to talk about your problems. Just remember, I'm always willing to help, and even if

I'm not with you in the current loop, you still have your friends from your own universe."

Legend gave a slight chuckle. "Yeah..." Legend closed his eyes, letting out a calming sigh. *'It's something I should have realized sooner...'*

Classic smirked before turning back to the portal. "Now then, I think it's time we show that dark freeloader that his joyride is up!"

Legend gave a nod, standing next to Classic. "Yeah. It's time to finish this once and for all."

He took a deep breath. Despite his newfound resolve, Dark Spyro's final words before he'd entered the current portal still haunted his mind. Legend shook his head, narrowing his eyes. No matter what things he had repressed long ago that Dark was about to throw at him, he knew that he needed to stay resilient. This had to be the final part of the nightmare, no matter what.

Steadying his nerves, he and Classic jumped through the portal.

Classic landed on the other side of the portal with a splash. Pulling himself up, Classic heard a wet *shlop* as he came up out of the mud. As he tried to gather himself, the smell of burnt wood assailed his nostrils. Coughing in surprise, Classic looked around to find himself in an unfamiliar place...with no Legend in sight.

"What the heck..." he mumbled, truly taking in the location for the first time. His immediate surroundings were mud and burning trees, the plants hissing, creaking and groaning in protest against the flames that devoured them whole. The fire roared back at its defiant food, the barest hint of an accelerant—some kind of animal fat, possibly pig—on its breath. Unsure of where anyone or anything else was, Classic's eyes darted around for someplace that seemed safe. Eventually, he noticed what looked like a recession in the trees.

Coming in to the clearing, he found himself at the base of a massive statue.

"Okay, I know this is a dream, not even my own dream at that, but still. I should have seen that from further away," he grumbled. Then, examining it more closely, he was struck by the level of detail in the brown rock. Actually, everything here was strangely detailed, to a degree that far and above exceeded the rest of the dream.

"This statue," a voice said softly behind him.

Classic whirled around to see Dark Spyro coming towards him, his gaze also on the statue. "I know it well. It's actual home is in the center of the Temple where I was trained by my masters. Magic or technology would lower it when the room was to be used and raised it again after the instruction was done."

Classic didn't turn his back to the black dragon, unwilling to be struck from behind. As he watched Dark Spyro ramble, he noticed that he seemed to be fidgeting, one of his back legs twitching in place.

"For the longest time, I wondered who it was. So, one loop, I asked."

Dark Spyro licked his lips as he continued. "Malefor. The statue is of Malefor as a young adult!" Dark Spyro barked out a laugh. "I mean how messed up is that? In the most sacred place to dragonkind that I know of, we have a giant statue of the guy who basically said 'screw you all, I'm going to blow up the planet.' I mean, it's so many kinds of messed up! But the dude was a genius, I have to admit that. Whether he discovered them for the first time or just rediscovered them, by the time he was a young adult, Malefor was using elements that his masters had never seen before! He was in a freaking league of his own! ...Maybe the statue was there to remind dragons of how far we could fall."

"You know, I've heard a lot about how similar we, Malefor and I, were at a young age. From what I heard, he was helpful, clever,

powerful... We've been alike to the point that we've been accused of being the same..."

The black-scaled dragon trailed off for a bit before speaking again. "I'm sure you've noticed how strange this place is? It's not a dream...not really. It's a memory. The only things different are the statue and you."

"Why are you explaining this to me?" Classic asked guardedly.

"Ah..." Dark Spyro began before trailing off and shaking his head, a forced grin on his face. "I don't... You wouldn't accept the answer... Not from me," he said with an almost apologetic smile. "But I have some things to do, now. And...well, I can't have you get in the way, but I suppose you deserve to know, so you can watch."

As he spoke, tendrils of shadow erupted around Classic, hog-tying and muzzling him in an instant. "You are powerful, but here...without my consent, you won't escape."

Now a prison of stone in the shape of an egg encased Classic, though it did not inhibit his senses or impair his breathing. One of the eggs at the statue's base vanished and Dark Spyro rolled Classic into the now empty position.

"Just like old times, eh?" he asked. After a moment, he lay down. "I wasn't expecting an answer, anyway."

"Spy? Spy!" A familiar voice carried through the still burning swamp. Legend flew in to a small fanfare of crashing trees behind him. Taking in the view he was greeted with, Legend dropped to the ground and growled out, "Where is he?"

"Safe," Dark Spyro snarled in return, jumping from the base of the statue to the ground. "More than we can say about Mom, Dad, Sparx...anybody who lives here, really."

And then, almost in a terrible concert, Classic began to hear screams beneath the roar of the flames.

"You aren't lifting a talon to save them, not that you ever did."

"This is just a dream, when I wake they will be safe, but Classic is in here with me and I need to keep him safe from *you* ," Legend spat.

Dark Spyro bared his fangs. "Don't *act* like you think this just a dream!" he shouted."You remember this day just as well as I, you damn *statue!* This is *NOT* a dream, this is our memory! Just because the alcoholic was willing to pretend this didn't exist does *NOT* discredit it's validity!"

"Then no matter what I do, I cannot save them. A new loop is not truly the same as traveling to the past," Legend said sadly, his eyes fixed on his enemy.

Dark Spyro lunged in fury. "There's no fucking way you can be me! How could anyone who called themselves family be as cold-hearted as you?! Our home is burning, our friends and family roasted by the flames, and what do you do? Nothing!"

"They wouldn't have wanted revenge!" Legend shouted back, fending off another attack.

"You think I don't know that?! You think I'd dishonor them in that way? Yes, I wanted vengeance! Yes, I wanted to rip those fuckers limb from limb and murder each and every single one of them for daring to step into our home!"Dark Spyro shouted before he took a pause as he began to breath heavy.

" *But* , I still would have kept my head clear, because it's not what they would have wanted." Dark Spyro panted. "You know what I wanted more than anything else, though? I wanted to *grieve* !"

He lunged at Legend. "I wanted to bawl my eyes out, and have someone tell me that it would get better, even if it was a lie!"

For a moment Dark Spyro stopped to catch his breath before putting real venom into his words. "But you...you stone-hearted facsimile of a dragon, you couldn't even shed a single tear! They did everything for us and you don't even have the decency to feel anything when they were slaughtered before our eyes! All because you're trying to be a perfect little soldier-boy! March to the beat, left, right, left, right! Straight over the cliff if that's what you're ordered to do! You have no imagination, no feeling, *nothing* !"

"I stayed back on Ignitus because I agreed that it was not the time and the only ones we'd end up hurting were ourselves and Cynder! Heck, I even let you have your way during the loops because I wanted to first figure out what the hell was going on. But you kept putting me off, discarding me, pretending that I didn't matter, that I didn't exist! I'm sick of it! Now you can be the one that gets ignored! This is my show now! You can stay back here and contemplate our navel for all of eternity!"

Legend barely had time to dodge a beam of convexity as he rolled to the side. Getting back to his paws, he was quick to take to the air. Dark Spyro roared, darting up into the sky after him. Legend turned to see Dark on his tail, a purple mist escaping his mouth as a faint purple glow began to shine at the back of his throat. Legend dropped down, avoiding another convexity beam as he shot a ball of fire in retaliation. Dark Spyro scowled, quickly rolling to the side to avoid it.

Legend scowled as he saw Dark Spyro readjusting his course to once again come flying at him. He quickly darted down towards the ground, dodging left and right as purple beams of energy missed him by inches. Legend groaned as a convexity beam nearly grazed his wing. Narrowing his eyes, he darted below the tree line, zigzagging in and out between the trees, flying as fast as his wings would carry him.

"You can't escape! No matter where you go, it's only a matter of time!"

Legend growled at Dark Spyro's words, quickly ducking behind one of the few trees that wasn't burning. Steadying his nerves, he began scanning the environment. He heard a rustling sound and immediately his muscles tensed up. Baring his fangs, he saw Dark Spyro land with a scowl, scanning the area as he narrowed his soulless white eyes. Legend took a deep breath, a low crackling sound echoing from his throat.

Dark Spyro let out a howl as a bolt of lightning struck him, his muscles locking up as electricity arced over his body. Not a second later, Dark was slammed in the side as Legend rammed into him horns first before quickly spinning around and smacking him with his earth-encased tail. Dark tumbled forward, but was quick to get to his paws as he saw Legend charge at him. Legend attempted to slash with his claws, but Dark ducked and retaliated with a head-butt to the jaw. As Legend stumbled back, he was tackled to the ground.

Dark raised his claws as he pinned Legend to the ground, but was forced to cover his face when a stream of fire shot forth. In this second of opportunity, Legend pushed forward and tackled Dark into a tree. In response, Dark head-butted Legend again square on the forehead, the temporary daze it caused allowing Dark to return the favor by slamming Legend into another tree.

Legend growled, summoning his earth element to put a pillar between himself and his dark counterpart. Dark Spyro staggered back as he attempted to regain balance, and Legend smashed through his pillar, managing to land a claw slash directly across Dark Spyro's chest. The deep red gash began to ooze blood. Dark Spyro roared before charging forward and retaliating with a claw slash to Legend's face, the attack landing a direct blow on his left check.

The dragons traded blows, neither side giving way as more and more cuts and gashes opened on their bodies. Legend grunted at each successful blow that was landed on him, the stinging sensation left in their wake causing him to scowl. Finally, they broke the stalemate as they jumped backwards, bodies bloodied and bruised as they panted heavily. Mirroring each others motions, both dragons

hunkered down, scowling as they let out low growls. Dark Spyro smirked.

"What the matter? Pain feeling a little *too* real?" Dark Spyro taunted, a sadistic grin on his face. "Well then, I think you may have already figured this out...but this ain't just a dream."

Legend narrowed his eyes. Baring his fangs, he brought up a pillar of earth just below Dark. Dark rolled to the side at the last second, the pillar catching his side and leaving a cut across his torso. With a growl, Dark retaliated by launching a beam of convexity at Legend, who quickly ducked as he charged forward. Legend tackled Dark to the ground, the two dragons rolling across it as they struggled to get the upper hand. Finally, Dark kicked Legend off him before quickly getting to his paws and launching a bolt of electricity.

Legend let out a loud grunt as the beam hit him, and Dark Spyro charged forth with claws bared. As he struggled to shake off the paralyzation, the air around Legend became icy cold and he sent a stream of ice shards towards Dark. The dark dragon ducked, but was unable to avoid several shards cutting his hide. Dark staggered back, body twitching as blood began to bleed from the gashes the shards had left.

Finally shaking off the paralyzation, Legend once again charged forward, flames starting to surround him as he comet-dashed at his counterpart, hitting him head-on. Dark tumbled backwards and slammed into a tree. Picking himself up with a growl, he dove into the ground with his earth element. Before Legend knew what had hit him, Dark shot up from the ground with a head-butt to Legend's jaw.

Once again, the two dragons were locked in a duel as they traded blows back and forth, the flaming background of the swamp beginning to melt around them as it slowly gave way to a black void. Neither side gave way or bothered to acknowledge their collapsing surroundings. Finally, Legend managed to land a savage blow with an earth-encased paw, sending Dark tumbling back. Legend began

to breathe heavily as he watched Dark struggling to get to his paws, his own legs shaking heavily as blood dripped down his scales.

Suddenly, Legend gasped and his breathing started to become erratic. Finally, he let out a cough, blood spitting from his mouth as he struggled to even keep his head straight. He managed to glance up, looking to the side as a small vision began to shimmer forth from the melting surroundings. In it, Legend saw himself in his bed, blood dripping from his mouth as he was having a hard time breathing. Legend's eyes went wide before he quickly shook his head and looked at his counterpart.

"We have to...stop this..." Legend forced out, taking deep breaths as he struggled to stand. "All this fighting is taking its toll on my body in the real world... If we don't stop now, *neither* of us will have a body anymore!"

"I don't care..." Dark Spyro said coldly, getting back on all fours as he glared at his counterpart. "With how I'm always being repressed, with how you refuse to acknowledge my existence...I might as well be dead already!"

Dark Spyro attempted to charge forward claws first, but he barely made it an inch before he fell over himself. Legend shook his head, taking a deep breath.

"Both of us can barely stand now as it is," Legend said, having to sit down as his legs began to shake violently. "Like it or not...for now, it's over."

"This is not *over* !"

Legend watched as Dark Spyro struggled to get to his paws, stumbling and fumbling over himself every time he managed to pick himself up. Finally, whatever steam Dark had left gave out as he fell to the ground one last time, his body refusing to move any longer. Legend watched on with an indifferent expression as Dark finally closed his eyes.

"It's not fair..."

Legend blinked, watching as Dark put his paws over his face.

"It's not fair... This is my body..." Dark muttered, his voice beginning to tremble. "You don't care... You don't feel... You're nothing but an emotionless statue... Why is it that you get this body, when I was here first...?"

Legend said nothing as he watched Dark lay motionless in place, his soft breathing the only other sound in the void.

"Cynder... You barely show her you care. And you've more or less forgotten about Sparx, *my brother* ... And Ignitus..." Dark Spyro choked out. Legend swore he heard him sob. "Even if the loops let us see him again... We still can't save him from what happens and never once did you mourn him, even when everything was all said and done... Even our *own parents...* "

Legend could only look on blankly at his dark side laying helplessly on the ground, silently sobbing to himself as he could barely move. He tried to open his mouth to say something, but words refused to come forth. Never once had he thought he'd *ever* see his dark side, the one that had turned Gaul into shattered stone and turned a peaceful park into a volcanic arena, laying pathetically on the ground in front of him as he sobbed to himself over how powerless he was.

Finally, Legend took a deep breath and closed his eyes. "...Why do you care?"

There was a silence. Dark Spyro was motionless. Finally, he removed his paws from over his face, his once glowing eyes starting to become dull.

"...You heard me," Legend said, looking down at him. "Why do you care? You're supposed to be an evil spirit that was forced onto me from the Night of Eternal Darkness."

A brief pause ensued as Dark looked up with narrowed eyes. Finally, he closed them as he took a deep breath.

"...I care, because you refuse to," Dark said, laying his head on its side as he looked away. "How many times do I have to tell you? I *am* you. There was no spirit that entered our body that night. That was *all us* . So why do I care? For the same reasons you do... Yet, you refuse to express *any* emotion towards those that, deep down, you *know* you care about, and you call me a monster..."

Legend's eyes went wide as Dark Spyro turned back to him, looking him straight in the eyes. "Tell me... How is it that I'm a monster for expressing something resembling emotion...?"

Legend's jaw dropped as he looked down at his dark form, pausing for a few seconds, unable to speak. Finally, he closed his eyes, taking a deep breath as he sat in silence.

"I think I'm beginning to understand now," Legend said, reopening his eyes. "It's been so long now that I can barely remember, but...all those years ago, I chose to lock my emotions away. Whether it was because I found them unimportant and getting in the way of keeping those around me safe, or because I was afraid of getting hurt by losing those near to me...I don't fully remember."

Legend shook his head, closing his eyes as he looked down. "Regardless, the people of my world needed a perfect hero; someone to look up to when the world was crumbling around them. Being the only one who had the power to stand up to Malefor, I knew it had to be me. In that time, when I tried to undo everything caused by a war I was born into from the start, I became more and more stoic, pushing how I really felt deeper down and down into the pit of my heart, until I fully deluded myself into believing this was who I really was...but now I'm beginning to see that wasn't the best of ideas."

He opened his eyes, looking at his counterpart on the ground. "It would seem my emotions didn't take kindly to being repressed, and

chose to rebel after being pushed down for far too long..."

Dark Spyro looked up at his counterpart, his glowing eyes giving way to the purple irises that had been clouded behind the soulless glow for so long.

"They chose to take a form in which they could fully be known, being able to force its way through in extreme fits of rage and grief," Legend finished, taking a deep breath as he closed his eyes. "In essence, you *are* me...the emotions I chose to repress so many years ago."

Dark Spyro looked up with a blank stare as he saw Legend look down with a slight smile. Dark closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. "I used to think of you as a mask, but to realize that without being forced to..."

Legend shook his head. "I think it's more so we're two sides of the same coin. You are my emotional side, and I am your logical side."

There was a silence as the two dragons looked at each other. Finally, Legend sighed, glancing downward.

"We can't fully exist without one another. Emotion without logic will lead to one being blinded by it, ending with one flying off the handle and hurting those they love," he said, shaking his head. "...Yet, at the same time, logic without emotions will lead to one forgetting those they truly care about, unknowingly hurting them in the process."

Dark looked down, his eyes drooping. "So...what are we supposed to do?"

Legend paused, closing his eyes as he sat in silence. Finally, he reopened his eyes, looking down with stern glare. "Do you promise not to seriously hurt those close to us or anyone who mildly annoys us?"

Dark paused, looking up at his counterpart with wide eyes. "Do you promise to finally get closer to those who care about you...and to finally mourn all those we lost?"

Legend took a deep breath as he paused. Several seconds passed before a small smile appeared on his face. "...I promise."

Dark smiled, the dark ethereal smoke around him beginning to dissipate. "Then I promise too."

Legend gave a smile before he slowly began to hobble his way over to his counterpart. Stopping inches before him, he slowly held out his paw. His counterpart looked at it with wide eyes, dark scales slowly giving way to purple. With a smile, he grabbed onto it as a purple glow began illuminating from their paws not a second later. Then, in a bright amethyst flash, the void began to give way.

When everything died down, only one Spyro was left. He sat in a lush green field, blue sky stretching for miles as a soft breeze carried on the air. Legend looked around at it, his wounds now gone. His eyes were wide as his mouth hung open slightly before it quickly gave way to a wide smile. He took a deep breath, closing his eyes as he heard the birds chirping slightly.

He paused, however, when he heard a faint muffled sound nearby. Legend glanced over to see a stone egg not far off. His mouth dropped as his eyes went wide, and he quickly rushed over to the stone egg replica as fast as his paws would carry him. With a quick open-pawed smack, the stone casing crumbled and Classic tumbled out, the dark ethereal bindings dissipating not a second later.

Classic picked himself up, stretching as he took a deep breath. Glancing over to Legend, he shook his head. "Just for the record, I'd like to let it be known that I am *not* into that."

Legend let out a hearty chuckle before he took a deep breath. Classic groaned, though he quickly shook his head as he began

glancing around with wide eyes. "What about Dark? Is he still around?"

Legend shook his head, giving a soft smile. "We won't have to worry about him anymore. You can say we came to an understanding."

A silence soon followed and only the sounds of the soft breeze and birds chirping was heard. Finally, Classic looked at Legend with drooping eyes. "Um...back at the burning swamp... Was all that stuff that Dark said...?"

Legend sighed, closing his eyes. "I was being an idiot back then." He shook his head. "I thought that if I just pretended it didn't bug me, that if I held everything deep down, it would just all stop... That if I didn't acknowledge what happened, it would all go away. Though, now I realize how foolhardy that was."

Legend frowned, slight tears beginning to form in his eyes. Quickly brushing them away, he reopened his eyes to see Classic looking at him with wide eyes, occasionally blinking as he said nothing. Legend chuckled, shaking his head.

"Hey. I want to thank you for all you've done," Legend said, giving a slight a smile. "Not only did you help me try to fit into this world after what... *happened,* but you also helped me now in this dream, which in turn made me realize something I should have a long time ago..."

Classic's eyes shot wide and he quickly glanced to the side. Legend stepped forward and wrapping his forelegs around him in a hug.

"What I'm trying to say is...thank you. Thank you for everything."

"Um, o-okay then..." Classic said, giving Legend a few quick pats on the back. "You're welcome. Now... uh..." Classic muttered, glancing upwards. "...I don't suppose you could let go now, huh?"

Legend chuckled, breaking the hug as he took a few steps back. Classic cleared his throat before he shook his head. He looked at

Legend, raising an eyebrow. "So...now what?"

Legend sighed, closing his eyes. "It's time I do something I should have done a long, long time ago..."

The air was unpleasantly thick as Classic looked around awkwardly. In his many adventures, he never come across a graveyard before. Fidgeting in place, he looked over to Legend, the dragon in question standing in front of a grave with a bouquet of flowers in his mouth. Gently setting them down, he closed his eyes as he sighed, tears beginning to form.

"Ignitus... I'm sorry it took me so long to do this," he murmured, a frown on his face. "Even if this is only a dream, and even if the loops allow me to see you again, please let me say this... I'm sorry I didn't honor your memory sooner. I was far too weak in baseline, and for it...you paid the ultimate price to try to protect me, to make sure the world had a fighting chance."

Legend's voice began to tremble as a small stream of tears began to run down his face. "You've been like a second father to me since you first found me, and I can't tell you how much I wish that things could have been different. Even in the loops, I'm still struggling to find a way to keep you from sacrificing yourself. Please, if your spirit still belongs to the ancestors even in the loops... I want you to know that...that..."

Legend hunkered down, body trembling as he took a deep breath. "...I love you. You'll always be like family to me and I'll look up to you, even when you're gone..."

Classic blinked as he watched Legend begin to silently sob to himself. He glanced around awkwardly, clearing his throat as he fidgeted in place. Finally he took a deep breath, heading over to Legend and placing a paw on his shoulder.

"Uh... I'm sure that he'll always be looking after you," Classic said, "and I'm sure there's *some* way to save him in the loops."

Legend paused, wiping his tears away as he glanced over to Classic. "Yeah... Even still, this was far too long overdue."

A silence soon followed as Legend picked himself up, taking a deep breath. Classic cleared his throat.

"Uh, I don't mean to sound insensitive, but maybe we should change the subject of the dream now..." Classic said before quickly leaning over to Legend and whispering, "Ya know, just in case *you know who* might be watching..."

Legend nodded, breathing a sigh. Turning to Classic, he blinked. "Any ideas? I'm not really sure what else to think of..."

Classic paused, placing a claw to his chin. With a wide grin, he snapped his claws. "I have an idea!"

Legend raised his forelegs, unable to keep them grounded due to the acceleration he was enduring. His brother had told him of a place called 'Dragon Shores', and described to him in detail its attractions so the two could enjoy a happy dream. Unfortunately for Legend, this 'roller coaster' was not as enjoyable as the other rides.

Struggling to converse with his brother due to the rushing wind, Legend exclaimed in thrilling terror, "Spy! I really hate you sometimes, you know that?!"

Classic kept his arms raised and basked in the strong gust that bombarded them. "Aw, shut up and enjoy the ride, will ya?!"

It was cold. It was always cold in this dank abandoned apartment, but tonight especially so. A hooded figure sneered, forcing open the door to his room, which mostly consisted of a bed and a table with a

worn chair. He slammed the door shut before going over to the table and placing a scroll on it.

Far too long had he been forced to live this horrid existence because of those stupid dragons.

'Soon,' he thought, opening the scroll. *'Soon ultimate power will be mine and all those stupid dragons will bow before me!'*

Pulling his hood back, a sadistic grin appeared on Ripto's face.

(A/N: ... And, after some time of filler updates, we're back to the current arc! Long chapter is long, but overall I think it's my favorite so far.

AbZ wanted me to make note of Dark Spyro's rather odd behavior this chapter in regards towards Cynder and Ignitus. Personally, I don't feel it's too hard to figure out why he said what he said in the context of the story itself, but I suppose if enough people are confused by it, I can update this chapter with an explanation about it, though I personally don't like to do such things because I feel it's bad if you have to explain things to the audience outside of the context of the story itself.

Anyways, yeah. This is one of the chapters we had to rewrite because the original was kind of short, but in the end I'm glad we did. This easily ended up becoming my favorite chapter of the Infinite Loops so far. Lot's of character development for Legend Spyro in this chapter, which surprisingly I don't see many other fics do. A lot of them tend to focus on Cynder because of her past... but honestly, as this chapter shows, Legend didn't exactly end the war with a squeaky clean slate either. I've always seen Legend as a bit of a 'shell shocked veteran', someone who chose to repressed their emotions because of the war. It's an angle I haven't seen in any story set in the Legend verse, so I'm glad the loops got to use this first.

Anyways, that's all for now. Might have to go back to some fillers after this because we're still rewriting chapters, but hopefully it won't take as long as this one here did.

Anyways, remember to leave a review because it helps us improve, and also remember to check out the Spyro loops Forum because I'd love to get to talk to some of the readers of our story.)

What about this G'Nasty G'Norc character

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments at the end of the chapter.)

Classic 17.1

Spyro awoke like he always did, herding sheep to dull the boredom of his pre-awake life while some dragons began interviewing the Artisans. Spyro stopped chasing the sheep and paused, looking at the interview going on with a raised eyebrow. He placed a claw to his chin.

"You know," Spyro began, turning to Sparx. "Gnasty turns the dragons to stone because they make fun of him during the interview..."

"Yeah? And what else is new?" Sparx asked, glancing down with an amused expression.

"What I mean is, what would happen if nothing bad was said about him during the interview?" Spyro asked, tilting his head. "Then he'd have no quote unquote 'reason' to turn the dragons to stone."

"I guess so. How are you supposed to stop them from doing that, though?" Sparx asked, raising an eyebrow.

Spyro paused before turning to the ongoing interview. He narrowed his eyes. It was time for a hostile show takeover. As Spyro rushed over to the scene, he could already hear it in progress.

"What about this G'Nasty G'Norc character?"

Spyro shook his head. Why this dragon felt the need to pronounce the silent G's, he would never know.

"Now, I understand that he's found a magic spell to turn gems into warriors for his cause..."

Spyro picked up the pace. This was usually when that blue dragon came in and began to insult Gnasty. He could already see that dragon stepping up to the microphone. Spyro smirked. Time for an unscheduled cameo.

"I—"

"I'll tell you about Gnasty!" Spyro said, quickly jumping into the camera view and causing the blue dragon to stumble back in surprise.

"Spyro? Aren't you suppose to be herding sheep?" the blue dragon asked, narrowing his eyes.

Spyro shook his head, brushing off the elder dragon's question as he looked at the camera.

"Gnasty Gnorc—G's in his name are silent, by the way," Spyro began, looking up at the interviewer before he turned back to the camera, "—was a gnorc that was banished to the Dragon Junkyard because of how jealous he was of our gems." He crossed his forelegs. "He's a bit short-tempered, but other than that he usually doesn't bother us too much."

The group of dragons looked down at Spyro with wide eyes. The blue dragon cleared his throat before crossing his arms with a slight smirk. "Well, well, Spyro. I didn't think you actually paid attention to us."

Spyro grinned. Resisting the urge to point out it was more so the result of a time loop than anything else, he glanced up. ' *Looks like the dragons won't have to worry about—'*

CLASH!

Spyro jumped, looking around at the dragon statues with wide eyes. He frowned, turning to Sparx.

"What the heck? What did I do wrong?" he asked, narrowing his eyes. "That's what really happened! And no one called him ugly this time!"

"Eh, your guess is as good as mine," Sparx said, giving a shrug.

Spyro's expression went flat. Taking a deep breath, he shook his head.

'I'm not going to give up on this,' he thought, heading towards the first dragon he usually saved. *'Gnasty may be short-tempered, but there must be some way to get through the interview without setting him off... Right?'*

Legend 17.2 (Arms and Armor pt.3) (Feat: AbZHz101)

Spyro, Sparx, and Ignitus came to the cave where the Ice King resided and Volteer was usually held. Spyro was worried because he had not seen Cynder flying away earlier, and didn't want to think about what that could mean. Though, thankfully, as they entered, Spyro saw Volteer's labored breathing. As long as they got him out of there soon, he'd be fine.

Then, as the Ice King began to move, Spyro realized that they had a problem, namely that they were in a cave with a low ceiling and the weapons that they had between them were cavalry lances. Thankfully, though, he had been noted as having his breath weapons, and he might even be able to use his Comet Dash a bit more traditionally, saying it was a desperate idea.

As the Ice King fell, Ignitus turned to Spyro. "Look around here and see if you can't find what they did to his weapons and armor. I'll get him out of here."

At Spyro's nod, Ignitus began trying to revive the fallen guardian. Spyro's hopes were minimal, seeing as there hadn't been a sack with the word "ARMOR" stitched across the front, but they became even more dismal when he noticed a particular rune on the armor of the Ice King, one that had been in the Dragon Temple and symbolized electricity.

"Ignitus," Spyro called out to the Fire Guardian. Ignitus turned to his pupil just as Volteer began to stir. "I think I found them..." he said, pointing to the evidence he'd found.

Ignitus snarled and the ambient temperature seemed to rise.

"Those..." Ignitus couldn't seem to find words that would adequately describe how horrible their foes were. "There is something sacred to us about our personal armors. To see them desecrated..." He bit back some of his distaste if only that Spyro not learn some of dragonkind's more creative curses. Ignitus forced himself to business. "Spyro, normally I would not ask it, but would you be willing to allow Volteer one of your sets? I was not able to find any armor in the temple, and our resources are dangerously thin as is."

Spyro hesitated. He understood why Ignitus was asking, but he needed his fury armor. If he didn't have it when he saw Cynder... Then he paused and dissected that particular line of thought. Yes, Convexity seemed to be the key to freeing Cynder, but did that necessitate his fury armor? The first time he had ever used Convexity had been in the realm of Convexity itself, three years before he had found the first piece of the fury armor. And while it did make manipulating Convexity easier, hadn't he been training to do that anyway? Convexity would still be his to wield, and there might be times when he did not have the benefit of his armor's boost. Best to learn his limits first, then.

Spyro nodded to Ignitus as he approached the still waking guardian. As Spyro looked at Volteer closely for the first time in the Loop, he noticed just how much bigger his wings and other upper back muscles seemed to be.

"Ignitus?" Volteer asked, his eyes still unfocused. "I feel as if I was just bludgeoned repeatedly with a twenty-foot-long pole, with twenty-five pounds of steel glued to the end by pressure, and then used as an organic power source for a most peculiar crystal."

"Say what?" Sparx asked.

"He got beaten up and then used as a battery," Spyro replied.

"Quite," Volteer continued, not exactly recognizing that there was anyone else there. "Though, those injuries do not sting with the same wrath as being forced to observe as my bow, quiver and armor were beaten around the form of my captor."

"Did you get that one?" Spyro asked Sparx.

"Eh, I just figure I'll tune him out," Sparx replied while stretching.

Spyro rolled his eyes in response. It was then that Volteer truly seemed to become aware of the other three presences nearby. His eyes shot open. "Ignitus! Incredible, unbelievable, I had understood my previous ocular stimuli to be caused by a very potent delusion powered by my own deep desires! And yet here you stand before me, if not as hale and hearty as when I last saw you!"

Ignitus smiled at Volteer's ramblings. "Volteer, it's good to see you." He then nodded to Spyro. "This is Spyro, and he is the one you should be thanking for your rescue."

"But, Ignitus," Spyro protested, "we fought off all of the apes together!"

"Perhaps, young dragon, but if it hadn't been for you, I would still be moping in the swamp, slowly allowing my grief to do Cynder's work for her." Ignitus turned to Volteer. "My friend, we went to the Temple and found it ransacked. I do not think we have a home there any longer."

The three dragons all held a moment of silence for their lost residence. In many ways it had been a family member.

"Thankfully, I found a bow and full quiver your size that was salvageable," Ignitus said, handing the larger bow and quiver over. "And young Spyro happened to find some older sets of dragon armor, though from where I have no idea. They aren't the same, but I hope they can do for now."

Spyro stepped forward, showing the two other armors to Volteer. "I can also use a different one if this type would suit you best," he offered.

Volteer smiled as he shook his head. "No, as an archer, for such protections to be necessary often means that something has gone drastically wrong. Though I suppose that, in these times, one misstep will spell the end of all of us." He frowned, looking at the two remaining armors. "It would make sense that if my own armor has been compromised so that I cannot wear it, such would also be the case for Terrador and Cyril. Both can use the silver armor with much greater skill than I."

With that, Volteer picked up Spyro's fury armor and waited for the magic to adjust for his size before carefully placing it on. "I also assume you would like me to teach young Spyro here my talents, Ignitus?"

Ignitus nodded and also gave Spyro a bow that was sized for him. Volteer noticed that there was an ape about five thousand yards off that had somehow managed to evade Spyro and Ignitus's earlier two-dragon assault. Without taking his eyes off the target, Volteer knocked the bow in about a quarter of a second, and pulled it back to full draw. As he did, electricity sparked out of his left claw up and down the bow, racing for the string. The sparks traveled to his right and then covered the entire arrow. Volteer released and a lightning bolt streaked out, slamming home into the heart.

Spyro and Sparx gasped as Volteer grimaced. "Missed," he said clicking his tongue. "I was aiming for the left eye."

Ignitus chuckled good-naturedly.

"There is an old joke," he mentioned, "that the only reason why electric dragons don't fire past the horizon is because the earth keeps getting in the way of their shots."

Classic 17.3:

"What about this G'Nasty G'Norc character?"

This time, before anyone could speak up, Spyro darted in front of the camera and microphone.

"Hey, Gnasty isn't that important! Really, you should hear about the time Nestor tried to use Argus' chisel to touch up a pillar in one of the temples! To this day, we still don't trust—"

CLASH!

Spyro frowned as the dragons around him turned to stone. Sparx placed a hand to his chin, floating next to Spyro with an amused expression.

"Really, you should have expected this when you said Gnasty wasn't important," Sparx said, resting on Spyro's head. "Gnasty may be short-tempered, but he also has an ego the size of the entire Dragon Realms."

Spyro let out an annoyed sigh. "Still not giving up on this."

Legend 17.4: (Feat: Masterweaver)

"Spyro?"

"Yes, Cynder?"

"Do you have any idea why we're octopi?"

"I talked to a couple of visiting loopers. Apparently this just happens."

Classic 17.5:

"What about this G'Nasty G'Norc cha—"

The interviewer barely got through his sentence before it sounded like a marching band was beginning to play. The dragons turned back, their eyes going wide at the sight. Spyro was covered in instruments from head to toe, from wind instruments like trumpets, to harmonicas that were being held up to his mouth by a brace on his neck, to drums that were set up to go off automatically as he walked.

Sparx looked on at Spyro's display with an amused grin, while the elder dragons moved their mouths in vain, unable to form anything that sounded like coherent speech.

CLASH!

Spyro tumbled over himself and the instruments rang out in a loud crash. Pulling himself out of the contraption, he scowled.

"What the heck!? No one insulted him this time, unintentionally or otherwise!" Spyro said, resting his head on his paws as he looked upwards with annoyance.

Sparx flew over to him, scratching his head. "...Maybe he's not a music fan?" he suggested with shrug.

Spyro's expression flattened as he let out an annoyed sigh. " *Still* not giving up on this."

Legend 17.6:

Spyro glanced around with wide eyes as he walked along the streets. The ponies gave odd glances at the dragon in their midst. Never once did he think such a bright and colorful world could exist. He closed his eyes, taking a pause in the middle of the road.

"What's wrong?"

Spyro looked towards his left with his eyes barely opened at the lavender unicorn that was shooting him a concerned look.

"N-nothing. I guess I'm just not used to such peaceful worlds," Spyro said, taking a deep breath. "My world is usually stuck in the middle of a war and so far a good portion of the variants I find myself in usually end up being rather..." Spyro bit his lower lip "... *unpleasant,* to say the least."

"I still find it hard to believe there are *two* looping Spyros, especially considering your worlds sound like complete opposites..." Twilight said, looking at Spyro with a raised eyebrow. "Are you *sure* you're not playing a prank on me, Spyro?"

Spyro sighed. "For the twentieth time, *no* . I am *not* playing a prank."

Twilight stood for a few seconds in front of Spyro with narrowed eyes. Though she held the unbelieving expression, she slowly backed away.

"Alright... I still don't fully believe it, though," Twilight said, continuing to walk down the street. "I think it won't be until I see you both in a loop that I'll be willing to believe it."

"Fair enough," Spyro said, walking alongside Twilight. "Most people don't believe us until we're both in the same loop with them, anyway."

Twilight glanced over with an indifferent expression. "So, what are we suppose to call you if there's two of you? I mean, calling you both Spyro would likely get confusing rather quickly."

"You can either call me Legend or Ro when we're in the same loop. The other Spyro also likes to go by either Classic or Spy," Legend explained, glancing over to Twilight. "The classic and legend thing is based off the nicknames the Admins gave our two universes, and the Spy and Ro thing is based off nicknames my brother Sparx gave us."

"Okay..." Twilight muttered, raising an eyebrow. Ro had explained to her about how he was adopted by dragonflies, but that still didn't make the idea of Sparx actually being his brother any easier to process. "Well, in any case, Ro... Welcome to Equestria. We're a sanctuary loop, so feel free to unwind and relax. Considering what you've told us about your baseline, it sounds like you *really* need it."

"Yeah..." Spyro said, before he glanced downward. "Kind of wish Cynder was here, though. If anything, she needs a break more than I do."

"Cynder? Who's Cynder?" Twilight asked, pausing as she glanced towards Spyro.

"She's my mate. We've been together since baseline..." Spyro said before he took a deep breath. "I won't go into what her baseline is like since she doesn't like telling outside loopers about it, but to say it wasn't pleasant would be understating it. Even after she figured out a way to avoid most...of..."

Spyro paused, noting that Twilight was looking at him with wide eyes and a blank expression. "...What?"

Twilight shook her head before putting on an amused grin. "Okay, yeah. You're *definitely* not the Spyro I'm familiar with," she said with a slight chuckle. "The Spyro I know wouldn't even *imply* he's with someone, even if it's for a one-off joke."

Spyro gave a chuckle. "Yeah, that sounds like Spy, alright."

Twilight shook her head, a kind smile on her face. "In any case, I'll make sure to note that. Besides being a sanctuary loop, we also

tend to help a lot of outside loopers with their problems, so if she ends up here, we'll do all we can to help."

"Thanks," Spyro said, giving a warm smile. "Just...please don't pressure her about it. She probably won't like it if she heard we had this conversation, even though I didn't go into any details. Cynder kind of prefers keeping her problems to herself..." Spyro said, closing his eyes as he let out a sigh. "She'll open up about them a bit more the closer she gets to someone, but to those she just met..."

"Don't worry. I think I know the type," Twilight said, raising and shaking a hoof in front of her. "I'll make sure to make a note of that. I promise we won't force her to explain anything she's uncomfortable with."

A big smile appeared on Spyro's face as he gave a slight bow. "Thank you."

"No problem. We are a place where outside loopers can relax, after all," Twilight said. "Now then, speaking of which, any ideas what you want to do to unwind?"

Spyro blinked, glancing up slightly as he stood in complete silence. "I'm...I'm not entirely sure, to be honest. Most of the time I spent in my baseline is dedicated to making it better and stopping the war early, so when I do have some free time to myself..."

"Well, why don't we check some things out to see what you like?" Twilight asked, tilting her head. "You don't have to worry about anything disrupting the peace here, so—"

Just as Twilight was about to finish that statement, the sound of something crashing and screams were heard as the citizens of Ponyville began running around in a blind panic. Twilight's eyes went wide as she looked around at the havoc. She was about to ask what was going, but she got her answer as something smacked into her face.

Spyro blinked at the sight of a small white rabbit-like thing grasping onto Twilight's face. It turned to face him, staring blankly on with its blue eyes.

"... *DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA*— "

Spyro's expression went blank as his eyes went wide, and the rabbit pulled what appeared to be an oversized spork out of thin air. Before anything happened, though, it was sent flying. Twilight scowled as her horn glowed brightly.

"Oh, come on! You've got to be kidding me!" she said, letting out a low growl.

Berating herself over how, even after so many years, she still had yet to learn not to press the mouth button, she was just about to go full-on alicorn mode when what appeared to be stage coach not unlike Trixie's skidded to a stop next to her, the words 'come with me if you want to stay sane!' plastered on the side of it.

"Hi, Twilight!" Pinkie called from the driver's seat.

Twilight could barely muster a half-hearted wave before Rainbow Dash exited the stage coach.

"Twilight, there you are!" said Rainbow Dash, quickly rushing down next to her. "Thank cider I found you!"

"Dash? What the heck is going on?" Twilight asked, quickly throwing up a barrier around them.

"Bad loop variant number four O four! Only on *steroids!* " Dash proclaimed, throwing her hooves up in the air. "Seriously! Normally when we have to deal with Rabbids, we can contain it before it gets out of hand, but these things have been coming out of the birching woodwork in Canterlot since the loop started!"

"Dash, come on! It can't be *that* ba—"

Before Twilight finished her sentence, the ground began to shake. The group looked around, seeing what looked like a volcano beginning to form. In a cartoony fashion, the volcano sunk down before shooting up and sending a wave of flying Rabbids into the air.

At this, Twilight could only face-hoof. *'Mouth button, Twilight! Mouth button...!'*

"Hurry! Get in!" Rainbow Dash said, quickly heading over to the stage coach. "We're going to try and hold up at the Crystal Empire until either they find a way past the barrier or the loop ends!"

Twilight sighed, looking around to see the havoc that was going on all around them. She turned to Spyro, who had an equally dumbfounded look on his face.

"Please believe me. I *swear* this doesn't normally happen in the baseline," Twilight said, a frown on her face. "If anything, we can still try to help you relax at the Crystal Empire while all this is going on."

Spyro glanced around, the constant high-pitched screams of "DAAAAAAAHHHH" in the air echoing out far and wide. His expression went flat.

'Somehow, I highly doubt I'll be doing much relaxing this loop...'

Classic 17.7:

"What about this G'Nasty G'Norc character?"

"Um, excuse me..."

The group of dragons all looked down at the young pink dragoness Ember, her big blue eyes wide as she put on the most innocent expression she could muster.

"Can I please say something?"

The group of the dragons looked at each other with confused glances before the camera dragon finally rested the lens on Ember.

"I may have a rather unpopular opinion of Gnasty, but I think he may get a bit more bile then he deserves," Ember said, a slight frown on her face. "I mean, yeah, he was jealous of our gems and all, but we didn't exactly make it easier on him by making fun of him, and banishing him to the Dragon Junkyard was a bit extreme." Ember closed her eyes. "Honestly, it's kind of sad. Maybe, if we had just been more accepting, he would have—"

CLASH!

Ember blinked before she looked around at the dragon statues with wide eyes. Spyro walked over with a flat expression. Ember frowned.

"Sorry, Spyro. I really thought that painting him in a more sympathetic light would work," she said, lowering her head.

Spyro sighed. "It's alright. I still wonder what set him off, though..."

"Maybe he doesn't like being pitied?" Sparx suggested, a hand on his chin.

Spyro closed his eyes, a frown on his face. Sparx rolled his eyes. "Let me guess. *Still* not giving up?"

"You called it."

"Uh, Spyro?" Ember asked, a worried expression on her face. "Maybe you should teleport me back home now? My parents are probably wondering why I'm on video miles away from Dragon Village..."

Legend 17.8:

Spyro awoke with a start, nearly stumbling over himself as he walked. Immediately, he noticed something was off compared to how he normally started the loops. He glanced down at himself, noting he was in his teenaged body that he usually grew into at the end of the loop. He was also in Warfang, which he normally wouldn't be at until the tail end of the loop. Shaking the thought off, he was quick to check his in-loop memories.

"...Huh?"

"Spyro? What's wrong?"

Spyro glanced upward to see Sparx hovering over him. Quickly shaking his head, Spyro brushed his current thought process away. "Hey Sparx, you like dragon fruit?"

"Depends. You trying to tell if I'm awake, or is that a general question?"

Shaking his head as he noted that Sparx was awake, Spyro quickly got back to the topic at hand. "Have you checked your in-loop memories yet?"

"Yeah, why?" Sparx asked, glancing down at the purple dragon.

Spyro shook his head before glancing back up at Sparx. "According to what they said, Cynder and I already beat Malefor..." he muttered, his eyes going wide. "You don't think that means the loops finally broke, do you!?"

As Spyro looked around with a growing grin, the sound of a crash rang out. Spyro jumped and was quick to rush down the street towards the source of the noise. As he rounded a corner, he skidded to a stop, his expression going blank.

"BAKA! Watch where you're going!"

Spyro blinked. A cart carrying cabbages had taken an unexpected swerve. A cheetah peddler stood in front of it, his mouth dropping as he fell to his knees. Cynder was standing a short distance away, her eyes narrowed as she glared at the crash. It was only shortly after that Spyro noticed the pink dragoness standing behind her. Sparx crossed his arms.

"Well, by the fact that pinky's here, I'm gonna say no on that," Sparx said, looking down at Spyro.

Spyro's expression went flat, but he quickly shook it off as he began walking down the street. As he approached the downed cart, he felt a sudden uneasiness in the air.

"Cynder? What's going on?" Spyro asked, raising an eyebrow.

Cynder turned around with narrowed eyes as she gave a low growl. The peddler stood frozen in place.

"This baka tried to run us over!" Cynder said, turning towards the peddler with fangs bared.

Spyro's expression remained emotionless as he watched Cynder growl at the peddler. Slowly motioning to Sparx to come closer, Spyro put a paw in front of his face and whispered into Sparx's ear, "The heck is a 'baka'?"

"Your guess is as good as mine," Sparx whispered back, giving a slight shrug.

Cynder grunted, quickly turning back towards Spyro with a growl as she darted right up to his face. "Hey, are you talking about me behind my back!?"

"Huh? Uh, n-no! Of course not!" Spyro said quickly, raising his paws in front of him as he quickly looked away.

Cynder narrowed her eyes, looking away as a slight blush appeared on her cheeks. "Baka! Remember, it's not like I *wanted* you to save me from eternal servitude under an ancient evil mastermind!"

Spyro could only blink in response to this statement. A massive grin appeared on Sparx's face. Crossing his arms, he was quick to fly up into the air.

"Wait, does that mean you would have *rather* stayed under eternal servitude to a nutbag who put you in chains?" Sparx asked, raising an eyebrow as he gave a cheeky grin. "Wow. I didn't take you for the kind of dragoness who's into *that* kind of stuff. All I can say is congrats, bro!"

Cynder's face turned beet red as she let out a loud growl, her eyes somehow turning complete white with large sketchy outlines around them as a large red cartoony vein appeared on her head. Sparx looked down, trying to suppress a chuckle. Spyro's eyes went wide at the sight, though he was quick to clear his throat as he tried to wipe the blush off his cheeks as well.

He took note of Ember quivering in the background. She appeared to have tears in her eyes as she sat on the ground. Spyro raised an eyebrow, noting that, for whatever reason, Ember had a pair of glasses on. Desperately wanting to change the subject, he quickly headed over to her.

"You alright?" Spyro asked, offering his paw to help her up.

At this statement, Ember appeared to lock up as her eyes became large, white, cartoony disks and a luminescent blush managed to push its way through her normally pink scales. Spyro's expression went blank at the sight, and he backed away slightly as Ember began to shake and babble incoherently. Finally, Ember opened her mouth wide...

" *…Piiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!"*

Spyro blinked as Ember began letting out a soft cry, her mouth opening up and down like a mechanical robot. Hearing this, Cynder jumped in front of Spyro, narrowing her eyes. "Look what you've done! You've made Ember cry!"

Spyro backed away slightly, his eyes darting every which way as he began to breathe heavily. "B-but, all I did was ask her if she was okay!"

"Baka! You know she gets flustered easily by guys around her age!"

"Aren't I the *only* male dragon around her age, though!? I've never really talked to her! How was I supposed to know that?"

Cynder paused, her expression going blank. She narrowed her eyes, a frown on her face. "Fine. You win *this* round..."

Spyro breathed a sigh as he watched Cynder head over to comfort Ember. He glanced over to Sparx with wide eyes. Sparx shrugged and began circling the right side of his head with his index finger. Taking the hint, Spyro took a deep breath as he turned back to the two loop-influenced dragonesses with a nervous chuckle.

"Uh, I just remembered; Terrador wanted to tutor me a bit more in how to use the earth element and he was kind of urgent about it, so..." Spyro said, glancing downward as he began fidgeting about.

Cynder glanced over to him with a frown. "What's the matter? Am I not good enough for you that you'd rather train with your mentors than hang out with me?"

"W- *what!? No!* It's just that, uh..."

Cynder huffed, looking away as she closed her eyes with a frown. "Fine! Go then! It's not like I *wanted* to hang out with you or anything!"

Spyro blinked, watching as a visible blush appeared on Cynder's cheeks. He frowned, his shoulders drooping. Seeing this, Sparx quickly flew down next to Spyro, hovering next to his ear.

"Spyro, remember! This isn't the Cynder you're used to!"Sparx whispered, placing a hand next to his mouth. "I don't know if you've realized it yet, but it seems the loops decided it'd be funny to apparently make Cynder a bit insane this loop!"

Sparx paused, watching as Cynder attempted to calm Ember down. Ember's eyes had gone back to normal, but as a cabbage began rolling her way, her eyes quickly returned to the odd state they were in before, and she once again started whining loudly. Sparx's left eye began to twitch before he turned back to Spyro.

"That's also not counting the nervous ball of melodrama it's turned pinky into! I don't know about you, Spyro, but I say we cut our losses and head for the hills until the loop is over."

Spyro bit his lip before looking back towards Cynder and Ember. Seeing Cynder glance over to him with an annoyed glare, Spyro froze.

"Uh, what's that, Terrador!? Hold on, I'm coming!" Spyro said, quickly darting off at speeds that would even impress Classic.

Cynder paused before she let out a sigh, looking down as she started poking her index claws together. "B-baka..."

Spyro frowned to himself as he walked, now moving at a slower pace, having put some distance between him and the in-loop dragonesses. Sparx flew down next to him with arms crossed.

"C'mon, Spyro! You know that wasn't *really* Cynder back there, right?" Sparx asked, giving a frown. "I mean, Cyndy can be a bit irritable when she's grouchy, but..."

"I know Sparx, but still..." Spyro said, looking up at him with a frown.

"Hey, try thinking of it this way," Sparx said, placing an open palm in front of him. "That was one of Cynder's annoying *cousins* , who occasionally pops up when Cynder has too much of a headache to deal with the current loop."

Spyro raised eyebrow at Sparx as he stopped in his tracks, looking at his brother in complete silence for a few seconds.

"... You know, I can't help but wonder how you come up with this stuff," Spyro said flatly.

"What can I say? I'm a creative dragonfly."

Spyro chuckled a little, taking a deep breath. Sparx smirked, flying next to Spyro as he placed an elbow on his head.

"So, it's nice to see you're feeling a bit better, but still... We heading for the hills or what?" Sparx asked, looking around the immediate area. "I mean, if the loop turned Cyndy into a ball of aggravation and Ember into an emotional bag that cries at the drop of a hat, I'd hate to see what it's done to the other females this loop..."

"Hey! Spyro!"

Spyro raised an eyebrow before turning to Sparx. Sparx shrugged. "Don't look at me. I've never heard that voice before."

Cautiously, Spyro and Sparx turned around towards the source of the voice...and, almost immediately, their jaws dropped as their eyes went wide in horror.

There were many odd things one would eventually see after beginning their looping life, but what stood in front of Spyro had to be the oddest thing he had seen so far. A white dragoness, or at least a creature that had the *body* of a dragoness, strode up towards him with a smug look on her face. Variant dragons were something Spyro

had gotten used to, but variant dragons who looked like they had shards of crystal embedded in their bodies was something else entirely. Spyro's left eye twitched as, instinctively, he began backing away as the crystal-dragon abomination drew closer.

"'Bout time I found you. Been looking all over the place for you," said the dragoness, not taking the obvious hint as she got closer to Spyro.

"Good lord, lady! Are you alright!? You look like you lost a fight with a chandelier!" Sparx blurted out, quickly flying out of the way.

The dragoness huffed, glaring at Sparx. "How dare you! I'll have you know these crystals are of the finest quality and are one hundred percent natural!"

"Uh, yeah. Lady, I don't think that's something you should be proud of!"

Spyro could only watch on with mouth agape as the dragoness let out a low growl at his brother. She took a deep breath before looking back at Spyro with a smile and narrowed eyes. Spyro flinched, once again beginning to back up as the dragoness drew closer.

"Anyways, Spyro..." she said, ignoring all sense of personal space as she brushed up against him. "Have you finally come to your senses? I mean, being a purple dragon, you are the perfect dragon by far, and the perfect dragon deserves the perfect dragoness..."

Spyro tumbled over himself as he attempted to back away. Quickly getting back to his paws, he cleared his throat as the dragoness gave a giggle.

"Uh, I-I'm sorry, but *who* are you!?" Spyro asked, eyes darting every which way for any possible escape route.

The dragoness huffed, a frown on her face. "Spyro! I'm ashamed! How could you forget the glorious Flashwing? I'm only the most

glorious dragoness in all of Warfang!"

"Uh, yeah. Whatever you need to tell yourself to sleep at night, lady."

Flashwing growled, glaring at Sparx as she bared her fangs. "Silence, you *insect* ! I'll have you know my family has been held in the most pristine regard for generations! We are the top of class when it comes to being a proper dragon!"

"So, such things as 'personal space' isn't part of being top class?"

Flashwing's face went beet red as Sparx just gave her a cheeky grin in response. As Flashwing took a deep breath, she turned back to Spyro with a seductive smile. Spyro gulped as she began to get closer, his back now firmly against a wall, her face barely inches from his.

"So, anyway, Spyro..." Flashwing said, her eyes narrowing as her voice lowered. "How about it? I can certainly make it worth your time..."

"U-uh, s-s-sorry! B-b-but I already have a mate!" Spyro said, quickly darting to the side as he began backing down the street. *'At least, I really,* really *hope I do this loop!'*

"Come on now, Spyro," Flashwing said, slowly walking after him. "I'm sure she'll understand you calling off that arrangement when she sees who you left her for..."

"Oh, she'll understand alright. She might be a bit worried over my bro losing his mind, though."

Flashwing looked back towards Sparx with a growl. In this momentary lapse of observation, Spyro was quick to begin hauling tail as he spread his wings and flew down the street as fast as they would carry him. Noticing this, Flashwing's jaw dropped.

"Wha— *Spyro!* Wait u — *AGH!* "

Before Flashwing could spread her wings to chase after him—how that would work with wings made of crystal was anyone's guess—she was interrupted when a tomato smacked the side of her face. She glared over, seeing Sparx holding another tomato above his head. She was about to say something when drips of tomato juice began to slide down her face. Noticing some on her snout, her mouth dropped as her eyes went wide.

"You horrid little insect! Do you know what you've done!?" she exclaimed, quickly shaking her head in an attempt to shake the tomato juice off. "My crystals! My lovely crystals! Do you realize how easily they *stain !?* WATER! *I need water!"*

Sparx smirked, watching as Flashwing took off in the opposite direction as she began to babble to herself about her appearance. Sparx placed the tomato back on the stand, pulling out a crystal from his subspace and setting it down beside it before heading after his brother.

Spyro sat with his back against the wall, taking deep breaths, his wide eyes darting back and forth as his body shook uncontrollably. Taking a deep breath, he let out an exasperated sigh, tipping his head back.

"Spyro?"

"GAH!"

Spyro tumbled over himself as he fell to the side. Looking up in wide-eyed horror, he saw a glowing yellow ball of light floating there. Sparx crossed his arms, giving a frown. "Geez, *relax.* It's just me."

Spyro silently picked himself up, closing his eyes. "Sorry, Sparx. Given how this loop has gone so far..."

"Yeah. I haven't seen anything like this since...well, ever. We rarely get variations," Sparx said flatly, scratching the back of his head.

"Yeah. When I said I wanted variations that didn't have to do with a war of some kind, this wasn't exactly what I had in mind..." Spyro muttered, taking a quick glance behind him to make sure he wasn't about to be jumped by any more 'admirers.' Looking back at Sparx with wide eyes and a nervous twitch, Spyro gulped. "Y-you don't think that dragoness exists in our baseline, do you?"

"'Mineral head'? Heck no!" Sparx said, crossing his arms. "I mean, you saw her! She has to be a variation! No way someone so ridiculous looking could exist in any baseline!"

Spyro took one last glance behind him before looking back at Sparx. "I really, *really* hope you're right, Sparx..."

"Huh? Oh, Spyro."

'Oh, what now!?' Spyro thought, his face drooping as he dared to look behind him.

"It's been a while since I last saw you. How have you been?" Elora asked, her expression barely showing enough emotion to show she was something resembling happy.

Spyro tried his best to put on a friendly expression. From what he remembered during the loop with Classic, Elora was nice and level-headed enough. However, considering this loop was dedicated to making every female a one-dimensional stereotype, he was *not* taking any chances.

"I-I've been good. You know, just trying to... *adjust* to things now that there's no war," Spyro said, his voice a bit shaky as he put on a mock smile.

"That's good to hear. If you need any help, remember that I'm always willing to give it to you," Elora said, though she was quick to place her hand in front of her mouth as she blushed. "Oh, uh, I mean, helping you adjust to the city, not, uh..."

Spyro could feel his left eye wanting to twitch desperately at the slip-up. How could so many females fall for *anyone* at the same time? He needed foresight on this, and fast. Finally having a moment to check his in-loop memories as Elora began babbling to herself over her slip-up, Spyro took a deep relaxing breath.

"Spyro!"

...Which was quickly disrupted as his eyes shot open, a terrified look on his face as he saw the dragoness he hoped he would never see again heading his way. Flashwing had a content smile on her face as she skidded to a stop inches away from his face, Spyro tumbling over at the invasion of personal space.

"Sorry it took so long to find you. You know how it is with us ladies. We have to look our best," she said before she narrowed her eyes with a smile on her face. "Now then, where were we...?"

"Flashwing, are you *still* on this?" Elora asked, narrowing her eyes as her expression barely showed something resembling annoyance. "Spyro has made it *very* clear in the past that he has no interest in you."

"Oh, and he has an interest in you?" Flashwing asked, narrowing her eyes at Elora. "You aren't even the same *species* he is!"

"And you *are* ?"

Flashwing let out a low growl as she glared at Sparx, while Elora tried her best to suppress a chuckle. Spyro gulped, about ready to spread his wings and haul tail out of Warfang as he backed up against a wall.

"Hey! *Get away from him!* "

Before Spyro knew what was happening, Cynder had darted forward, standing in front of Flashwing with a scowl. Flashwing merely held a slightly amused smirk on her face.

"Oh look. Little miss *Terror of the Skies* is jealous. Why don't you just give up? Besides calling him an idiot all the time, after everything you did to him, do you *really* think he has feelings for *you?* "

Spyro scowled, about to step forward to object. Fortunately, or *un* fortunately, Cynder was quicker to speak up.

" *BAKA!* How dare you! At least I still have something resembling common sense after all that happened to me!" Cynder said, growling as a scowl was planted firmly on her face. "Unlike *you* , you self-absorbed intergalactic hick from space!"

"Intergalactic hick from space? *I ntergalactic hick from space!?* " Flashwing exclaimed, narrowing her eyes as she got right up to Cynder's face. "I'll have you know, you *uncultured ruffian!* My family may have come from a different planet, but we are also the top of class both there *and* here! Unlike *you* , you barbaric swine!"

"Yeah, top class of egomaniacs, maybe!"

"Really now? Is that the best comeback you got? I suppose I shouldn't have expected much of someone who prefers to solve problems with their claws!"

"Yeah, yeah. I fought in the war! If you're going to throw that in my face, why don't we go outside the walls and I can show you exactly *why* I was such a force to be reckoned with!"

"Now, now, girls," Elora said, quickly getting in between the two bickering dragonesses. "We're all close to adults here. Surely we can handle this in a more civilized manner."

"That's what *I've* been trying to do. This riffraff here is the one being unreasonable!"

"Oh really! This coming from the *'lady'* who's quick to insult anyone who slightly disagrees with her! BAKA!"

"Who the heck even *says* 'baka' these days!? If anyone's an idiot here, it's *you!* "

Spyro pressed further against the wall, his eyes wide in terror at the ensuing argument between the three females. He looked to his left, about to dash away, but paused when he noticed a pink head poking out from around the corner. Ember froze when she saw Spyro looking her way, eyes wide as she began to shake slightly.

"... *Piiiiiiiiiiiiiiii—* "

Spyro began back-stepping as he spread his wings, but he was quickly grounded before he took off when Flashwing wrapped her forelegs around him.

"Come on, Spyrie-poo, tell these *commoners* that clearly a high class dragon such as yourself deserves a high class dragoness in tow!"

" *Baka!* Spyro, tell this self-absorbed *bitch* that you have no interest in her!"

"Spyro, calm down and just tell everyone you're not looking for someone at the moment!"

" *Piiiiiiiiiiiiii! Piiiiiiiiiiiiiii! Piiiiiiiiiiii!* "

Spyro began breathing heavily as he saw Sparx trying in vain to push his way past the onslaught of females. He began to rock back and forth, vision beginning to blur as breathing started becoming a strain for him. Suddenly, just when things seemed like they couldn't get any worse, a bright purple flash erupted just in front of the mob of females.

"Sorry, ladies, *but he isn't interested* !"

Before Spyro knew what had happened, there was another flash of light and the girls in the general vicinity collapsed. Spyro blinked,

now having a moment to look around at the unconscious mob of girls who all wanted to be his mate. Glancing over, he saw that whatever had happened had affected Sparx too. Before he could say anything, he was whisked away in a purple flash.

Spyro appeared on a mountain top, eyes rolling in his head. Quickly shaking it off, Spyro glanced over as he felt a presence next to him. Stumbling backwards, the lavender unicorn shook her head.

"Relax, Spyro. I'm awake, and have no interest in going along with the role this loop put me in," Twilight said, giving a small smile. "Good thing I got there in time. You looked about ready to pass out." She raised an eyebrow. "... By the way, which Spyro are you again?"

"Legend. Or Ro," Spyro said, slowly picking himself up. "You know, the one who *isn't* horrified by feelings of love... Of course, after *this* loop, though..."

Twilight chuckled. "Okay then. Am I correct in assuming this isn't what your baseline's like?"

"Not by a long shot," Spyro said flatly, expression going flat. "Though, *somehow,* it ended up just as stressful."

"Well then, Ro, allow me to welcome you to your first 'unwanted harem' variant. When I looped in, I was supposed to be the 'quiet bookworm' type, but..." Twilight closed her eyes with a frown. "As someone who has unfortunate experience with these kinds of variants, and can sympathize with how unpleasant they are, my best piece of advice is to *run* . Preferably to some place that non-loopers usually can't reach. Like the *moon* ."

Spyro looked on blankly at Twilight's suggestion. "Can you actually *do* that?"

"Sure. The moon, Mars, the not-really-a-planet Pluto... Take your pick."

Spyro tilted his head, raising an eyebrow. "...Is it alright if I take Cynder with us, even if she isn't awake at the moment? She's my looping mate, so..."

"Depends. What kind of personality type was she?" Twilight asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Not sure... All I know is she kept calling me a 'baka', whatever that is, and seemed easily annoyed."

"Tsundere," Twilight deadpanned. "Trust me, Spyro. Even if you two are together in the loops, you do *not* want to get mixed up with tsunderes. Besides, from what I gather, purple dragons apparently have an odd effect on females this loop, regardless of species." Twilight glanced up at her horn. "If it weren't for the layer of protective magic I have casted around me at the moment, it might not even matter that I was looping or not."

"And how do you know that?" Spyro asked, raising an eyebrow.

"It was in the book I was reading when I awoke," Twilight said, pulling a book out of her subspace. "Here. Chapter eight, page sixty nine."

Spyro looked at the book in confusion before looking back up at Twilight. "...Why do you have it in your subspace?"

"Oh, I just kind of collect books from all around the multiverse, is all..." Twilight said, scratching the back of her neck. "I mean, considering this is a variant, it's unlikely that it'll pop up again anytime soon."

Spyro blinked, but regardless quickly shook it off, opening the book and turning it to the respective page.

'Alas, Malefor wasn't always the crazy megalomaniac he was remembered for. Once upon a time, he was a great and helpful dragon in his own right. However, among the many abilities a purple

dragon has, unintentionally charming ladies seems to be one they cannot control. It didn't take long before their constant attention grabbing—and the looks of ire from fellow males—caused Malefor to finally snap and spark the century-long war he was infamous for.

When the next purple dragon is born, we must take caution to keep females away from him at all cost, lest we risk a repeat of what has happened with Malefor...'

Spyro's eye twitched. Malefor went insane and started a war because girls wouldn't leave him alone. The worst part about it was, considering everything he'd experienced, it wasn't that hard to believe...

Classic loop 17.9:

"What about this G'Nasty G'Norc character?"

"I'll tell you about Gnasty Gnorc!"

The dragons jumped as Hunter rushed towards the camera, grabbing the microphone off the boom and quickly hogging the camera. "Gnasty Gnorc is one of the greatest beings in the Dragon Realms! He's one of the strongest and most level-headed gnorcs to ever exist! Gems quiver in his presence, and he was wrongly banished to the junkyard. I say it's all you dragons who are crazy, and—"

CLASH!

Hunter dropped the microphone as he looked around at the dragon statues in confusion. Spyro walked over, his expression flat as he let out a low growl.

"Okay, *seriously!* The *heck* did we do wrong this time!?" Spyro exclaimed, smoke flaring from his nostrils.

"Uh... Maybe he thought you were mocking him?" Sparx suggested with a shrug. "Really, your guess is as good as mine at this point."

"Whatever the case, you still owe me twenty thousand gems for that," Hunter said, pulling his jetpack out of his subspace pocket. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to the Forgotten Realms for the time being since I've likely made every dragon in this current loop very, *very* angry at me."

Spyro watched as Hunter took to the sky, flying off as fast as his jetpack would carry him. Sparx glanced down at Spyro. "...Still not giving up?"

Spyro merely let out a growl in response.

Legend 17.10:

Spyro scowled as he looked over himself, struggling to get used to his short body structure. If Sparx had had arms, he would have placed one of them in front of his mouth as he chuckled.

"Well, I have to say, you've never looked better, bro."

Spyro's expression went flat. "Shut up, Sparx."

"Ah, c'mon Spyro! Just because you look like a gremlin this loop doesn't mean you have to act like one," Sparx said, a mischievous grin on his face.

Spyro let out a low groan, closing his eyes as he placed his paw over his face. So far this 'Skyland' had been home to some rather *interesting* creatures, to say the least. Spyro couldn't imagine who could have come up with such outlandish designs for the beings of this world. It wouldn't have bugged him as much had it not been for the universe giving him an equally odd design to match, but the laws of the universe were apparently a very fickle mistress. He took a

deep breath, already getting the feeling this loop was going to be a thing.

"Hey, look at it this way... At least this universe had enough common sense to keep you within the bounds of reptile anatomy."

Spyro frowned as he looked over to Cynder, said dragoness looking down with a scowl at her rather *endowed* chest. Expression flat, she closed her eyes. "Dragonesses are *not* supposed to have these..."

Spyro went over to Cynder, placing a paw on her back as he gave a concerned frown. Getting a slight smile out of his mate, Spyro gave a smile in return. Sparx rested down on Spyro's head with an amused smirk.

"All things considered, I made out rather well," Sparx said, looking down them. "It's a bit annoying not having arms, but at least I look reasonable in comparison to that other Sparx."

Spyro rolled his eyes at his brother's comment. He took a deep breath. All things considered, this loop could have been much worse. At least there was no war to deal with, so that was a good thing at the very least. If rather odd designs was the worst this universe could throw at them, then this loop might not be so bad after all.

" *Oh, Spyroooooooo!"*

Spyro froze, face curling in a terrified scowl as he saw a certain mineral-based dragoness heading their way.

"Hide me!" Spyro said, quickly darting behind Cynder.

Sparx watched as Flashwing approached in the distance. He narrowed his eyes, though he was quick to roll them. "You know, I'd say I was surprised that stonehead actually has her own world, but considering what we've seen of it so far..."

Spyro's left eye twitched. So much for a peaceful loop away from the war...

Classic 17.11:

"What about this G'Nasty G'Norc chara—?"

"I'll tell you about Gnasty Gnorc, alright!"

The dragons jumped out of the way as Spyro leapt in front of the camera, grabbing the microphone off the boom as he narrowed his eyes and bared his teeth, a low growl escaping his throat.

"Gnasty Gnorc is an oversensitive whiner who is quite possibly the only being in the entire Dragon Realms that can get into a hissy fit over someone *outright freaking praising him!* I swear, in all my time in the realms, I have not met such a childish, *ugly, son of a*— "

Spyro awoke in a daze as a flash of light flared out around him. Grabbing his head, he steadied himself. Ember was standing in front of him, Sparx floating next to her. Spyro blinked.

"You alright?" Ember asked, a concerned look on her face.

"I think so... What the heck happened?"

"Gnasty turned you to stone," Sparx deadpanned, a smirk on his face.

"What? How? Doesn't the spell usually just fly right over me?" Spyro asked, sitting down as he desperately tried to make the world stop spinning around him.

"Not when you enraged him enough that he specifically targeted you first," Sparx said, giving an amused grin. "In hindsight, maybe calling him out while hogging the camera *wasn't* the best of ideas."

Spyro groaned, holding his head in his paws. Sparx placed a hand on his chin. "Let me guess. Finally give up?"

"Was the rant not obvious enough?" Spyro deadpanned, glaring at Sparx. Finally picking himself up, he shook his head. "I give up! There's no freaking way to derail the interview that *doesn't* result in Gnasty turning dragons to stone! If I want to stop him from doing that, it'd be easier to teleport to his lair and *personally* tell him to stop it!"

Spyro took a deep breath, a scowl on his face as he began mumbling under his breath, heading towards one of the dragon statues. Ember blinked before turning to Sparx.

"Is he really giving up? Surely there has to be *some* way to keep the interview from going in a direction that results in dragon statues..."

"He's not going to give up," Sparx said flatly, an amused expression on his face. "He may rage-quit for a bit after several failed attempts, but he's nothing short of stubborn. I give him about a loop or five before he attempts to derail the interview again."

(A/N: Just putting this out there, this author's note is likely going to be long, as I have a lot to say. And when I mean long, I mean *longer* than usual. /shot

And thus, I think we finally have the loops' first real running gag. I'm not going to try and over-abuse it, mind you. That happened in the FiM loops with the 'why are we 'X" loops, and now it's gotten to the point where, unless it's some variation mocking it, they've more or less outright banned these kinds of loops from the compilation threads.

Also speaking of the FiM loops, I've come to a decision that a lot of you likely aren't going to be happy with...though, a lot of you will likely also be happy about this decision. From now on, there's going to be a decrease in FiM-fused loops in the Spyro

loops, with 'A Heart of Crystal' likely be the last serious thing I'll write that involves it.

I have many reasons for this, but the main one boils down to the threads where people submit snips has slowly more and more been taking a turn into the dreaded 'serious business' territory. It's not *super* bad at the moment, but there have been a *lot* more arguments over snips then there were in the past, and a lot of the usual gags, as well as the 'Equestria is the main sanctuary/therapy loop' have come under fire lately about how they're becoming the answer to any and all problems.

And that's not even *getting* into the arguments about how Equestrian loopers have become broken uber powerful and need a nerf for things to be interesting again plz... Which is not helped by the people who say that they would still remain game breakers even if they had their powers suppressed for a loop and had no foresight of what they're dealing with whatsoever.

Which reminds me of another point I want to make. There's been some reviews pointing out that the loopers should be much more powerful than I'm portraying them in the context of the story. This is because, besides causing arguments like I'm pointing out above, I don't feel like being trapped in a time warp would instantly turn you into a demi-god. I know this is going against how other people portray characters in the loops, but here's my reasoning.

First off, having done research on this (after hearing this on Cracked), it can take at *least* around ten years to properly master a skill, and that's *only* if someone is working around the clock with no rest whatsoever *just* practicing said skill, so even in a time warp, while Legend and Classic could learn additional abilities to their elements, and maybe some outside loop abilities, it would *still* take them a very long time to master them, even in a time loop.

There's also the fact that, unlike what most shounen animes protest, *everyone* and *everything* has their limits. You can only put so much storage on your computer before it just can't handle any more, like how you can only body build until it becomes outright *dangerous* to continue to do so. Even if a time loop allows them to build their raw power, there's only a certain threshold they can reach before they just can't push it any further, at which point the best they can do is learn new ways to use one's abilities.

Basically, it's how I would view a 'realistic' time warp, more or less. You can increase your skills and abilities through sheer repetition, but unless you fully *devote* yourself to increasing your abilities, you're not going to reach demi-godlike levels any time soon, and even then, *beings still have their limits.* Heck, even *DBZ* was willing to acknowledge that with it's latest movie where **SPOILER ALERT even when Goku got yet *another* new Super Saiyan form, it *still* wasn't enough to push him past the threshold needed to properly fight at the same level as a God, being one of the few times he *failed* to stop the bad guy. **SPOILERS END****

Besides, taking into account that Legend characters usually have the war to deal with in baseline, and Classic characters in general prefer messing around instead of training, I highly doubt any of them are working around the clock just to become stronger. Besides, I would also generally prefer keeping them 'reasonably' powerful than just making them powerful for the sake of being powerful.

Anyways, with my two cents on 'power levels in the loops' out of the way, I should also point out this chapter was where I finally acknowledged the Skylanders verse. It started because I couldn't think of any other females in the Spyro verse who have showed an interest in Spyro for the harem snip, and I found Flashwing's design ridiculous enough to be hilarious, so I

decided to roll with it. Plus, it was kind of obligatory there'd be a loop poking fun at Skylander redesigns.

Does this mean Skylanders will be added in to the mix? Well, not as its own dedicated snippet verse. While it *is* going to be treated as a separate universe like the Classic and Legend verses in case someone wants to start up a Skylanders loops, for the most part, the only things that'll likely appear from it are characters that are needed for a snip to work.

Now, I feel like *someone* is going to find my treatment of Flashwing hypocritical considering most have Ember in that position, which I have made very apparent in the past that I hold a *lot* of disdain for. In my defence, I'm *not* treating Flashwing like that as shipping fodder. I absolutely *detest* when people do that... I'm doing it because the idea of Legend having an abhorrent admirer is too *hilarious* to pass up and is *not* going to be taken seriously in the slightest. On top of that, *everyone* in the harem snip was flanderized to comedic extremes, so yeah. XD;;

Besides, I feel like it fits Flashwing's 'personality' a lot more than it does Ember. Most Skylanders have next to zero characterization. From what I've read on the wiki, Flashwing's only characterization is that she came from a meteorite and sent the Skylander who found her flying into the air for whatever reason, and that combined with some of her in-game quotes, from what I heard, make her sound rather full of herself. Going off of that, it'd make more sense that Flashwing would go after the legendary purple dragon because she's rather conceded and would want only those she considers of equal importance to be her mate a lot more then Ember.

That said, if she does appear in later snips, she is *not* going to be as extreme as she was in harem snip. I read on the Skylander wiki that she does have a good heart deep down, so you can consider the harem snip a variant when it comes to personalities. She'll still be very flirty towards Legend (and

possibly Classic), but no 'get out my face before I kick your arse' like she was in that snip.

And again, it's mostly because of *rule of funny ,* given how ridiculous I find Flashwing's design. I suppose if there's too much of a backlash, though, we can easily just chalk it up to a loop variation. /shot

Also, a bit of a self plug here, but for all of you who are enjoying the Spyro loops so far, and especially the interactions between Classic and Legend characters, I recently started up another fic entitled 'Echoes of the Past' that has a good combination of both series in it like the loops. It's a bit more serious in tone though, being an adventure fic instead of a comedy, but over all I like how it's turning out so far. For all of you who have been asking for a Classic Cynder, you should go check it out, as that fic has what I would consider Cynder to be like if she was born in the Classic verse. (Though, recently I've decided to go back and retool the prologue a bit to tone my original characterization of her down a bit.)

Now then, with the longest author's note *ever* out of the way, it's *finally* time to get to the loop titles.

All Classic loops this chapter: Maybe if you tried breaking the camera...

Legend 17.4: One of the loops' most classical gags. We're including it just this once because of tradition, and that's the *only* time it'll pop up.

Legend 17.6: This was supposed to be the start of a running gag that Legend has absolute *terrible* luck when it comes to FiM loops, but again, 'serious business' happened, so...

Legend 17.8: Would it be weird to say this was a legit idea I had for a fanfic? Only difference is there would be OCs as well as canon characters. And they would stay in and or as close to

character as possible. And the OCs would have realistic personalities and not be blatant anime stereotypes. As well as having an overall plot.

So, basically, a *good* attempt at the harem genre. /shot

Legend 17.10: You know, there was a recent joke on a Forum I go to that deals with 'things a dragoness should *not* have' that I can reference, but I'd rather not...)

An old friend visits (!)

(Fused loop 1.1 continued) (Feat: TokoWH, UkeleleNarwhal, AbZHz101, and Masterweaver)

Classic groaned. Blurry eyes opening, he saw a figure hovering over him. As things came more into focus, Classic blinked. Nina stood over him with a wide smile, gently rubbing his head.

"Good morning!"

"Ah!" Classic shouted, jumping slightly in his bed.

Legend stirred with a groggy groan, glancing over to see Nina in the room. A little red flag going off in his head, Legend's eyes went wide and he quickly looked at the pillow his head was resting on. It was stained with blood from the strain last night had had on his physical form. Glancing back quickly to see Nina still focused on Classic, Legend was quick to slip the pillow into his subspace before beginning to chip off any stained blood on his chin with his claws.

"Mom! I can explain, just don't—" Classic began, sitting up in his bed.

"Explain what? That you're my *tejedor* ?" Nina said, the wide smile never leaving her face. "That needs no explaining, just come downstairs, quick, quick!"

With that, the Dream Weaver raced out of the room, leaving two dazed and slightly worried dragons in the dust.

Classic turned to his brother with a frown. "She saw the dream, that's for sure."

"Question is, how much did she see?" Legend said, quickly getting out of the bed and onto his paws.

The Spyros stayed in utter silence as they left their beds and headed down the stairs, occasionally exchanging worried glances. They paused just short of the kitchen, where both of them could hear their parents chattering amongst themselves. Legend turned to Classic, giving a nod. Classic's eyes were wide as he frowned, but nonetheless gave a nod. Taking a deep breath, both dragons entered the room.

"Flash! Turn the camera on, your son's coming!"

Classic blinked as he entered the room, seeing his loop parents standing around the table, upon which was set a cake. Classic glanced over to Legend, who gave a shrug in response.

Flash struggled with the contraption in his paw. "Give me a break! I always have trouble figuring this thing out."

Expression going flat as he looked at his father struggling with the device, Classic stepped forward. "Dad, let me see it, alright?"

"Oh no you don't," Nina said, quickly rushing over to Classic's side. "You're sitting right here, in front of the cake I've got for you."

Sighing, Classic sat down in the chair, while Legend took a seat across from their mother. The latter dragon looked on with wide eyes as he glanced around the room, while the former looked down at the icing on the pastry.

"'To my son, a future Dream Weaver,'" Classic read, pausing for a few seconds before he turned to Nina. "Mom, you didn't have to do this..."

"Of course I do, honey. This is an important step in your life and it decides what you do for the rest of it."

Flash added from behind the camera, "It's true, Spyro. You can be a therapist, a psychologist, um..."

After some stalling, Flash began to sweat, quickly putting on a wide grin. Nina narrowed her eyes.

"Is that all I can do, Flash? Am I a therapist for a living?" she asked, crossing her arms.

"No, not at all!" he said, backing away slightly as he held a paw out in front of him. "You do the neighborhood dream patrol thing."

Nina held her snout high at this. "Is that it? Then you do the 'check what other people write' thing."

"Honey, don't take it that way, I just—"

"You just don't know that I'm a monitor, Flash. A *monitor* ."

"Um, Mom?"

All heads turned toward Legend, the dragon in question putting on a smile. "I thought we were celebrating Spy's dreamwalking?"

Nina took a deep breath, quickly smiling yet again. "That's true, and that's what we'll do. Bring us a knife, won't you?"

As Legend left to retrieve the utensil, Nina held the dragon of honor's paw within her own, kneeling down and looking Classic straight in the eyes.

"Son, you are capable of great things. But you have to remember to use your abilities wisely and morally. It would kill me to see you giving nightmares to people you don't like, so I'll say it right now. No nightmares or you'll be sent to a Peacekeeper school immediately. Do I make myself clear?"

Classic nodded, putting on a half-hearted smile.

"Also, it's my job to keep watch on the dreamscape here. If you peek into someone's dream without their permission, I'll give you a nightmare so bad your bed will get wet. And I don't mind the

laundry," Nina said, a slight smirk on her face. She was quick to push it away, though, her eyes narrowed.

"Also, most importantly... I'd prefer if you didn't try to perform any dream therapy for the time being," Nina said, closing her eyes. "I didn't get to see the full dream, but I did see that your brother had to rescue you from being trapped in a boulder. The dreamscape can be a dangerous place, Spyro, especially when it's not your own. Though we may have the power to influence dreams and fight off nightmares, a being's subconscious psyche still has complete control over it, and can still even get the drop on the most experienced of Weavers..."

"All I'm saying is...don't try solving other's problems in the dreamscape. At least not until you become more experienced with the extent of what powers you possess there. If something goes horribly wrong, it can permanently damage your psyche, and if anything were to happen to you..."

Classic blinked as he was pulled into a hug. Nina held him tightly. "Just...just promise me, if things start going south in a dream, get out of it as soon as possible. Please..."

Classic looked at his loop mother blankly. Taking a short pause, he placed one of his forelegs around her. "O-okay... I promise."

Nina sighed, letting go of her son and giving a smile. "Good. Now that we understand, let's eat. Take the first slice and I'll cut the rest, honey."

Placing the slice on his plate, Classic grabbed a fork and dug into the fluffy cake. He smirked, glancing over to Nina, who had a wide smile on her face, Flash also smiling as he kept the camera on the festivities. Classic looked down at his piece of cake, a smile also coming to his face.

'It's actually kind of nice to have parents. I may have looped in as Flame and Ember before, but...' Classic closed his eyes. *'I wonder*

who my real parents are...? ... Eh, doesn't matter. I don't need to know. I'm used to just being raised by the Artisans in general. I don't need to know who my real parents were. Not today, tomorrow, or ever...'

Classic opened his eyes, looking at the piece of cake that was so delicately made with care. Despite the festivities, he frowned.

'Yeah...'

It had been almost an hour since the festivities had died down, and Legend was busy lost in thought. He had made his way back to his room and was now laying in his bed. He knew Nina would be knocking on the door any moment now to ask him what his nightmare was about, but that wasn't the only thing that was on his mind at the moment.

'You said you love Cynder, yet how much do you really know about her?'

Legend closed his eyes, hunkering down into his pillows.

'You've never taken time find out her interests, what she's like when she's not *moping about her* dark and troubled past, *for who* knows *how many times in a row!'*

Legend let out a low groan, a frown on his face as he placed a pillow over his head.

'She only said she loved us the first time because the world was crumbling around us. The damn apocalypse was at our doorstep! How do we know she didn't say that because she was grateful *to us for all we've done for her!? That she only continued to go along with it once the loops started up because she was confusing* gratefulness *for love!?'*

Legend pulled the pillow off his face and turned to look up at the ceiling, eyes drooping as a frown creased his lips. He took a deep breath, closing his eyes. He wasn't sure if what was said in that dream was only supposed to demoralize him, but that didn't stop those words from ringing true. Placing his front paws on his face, he let out a low groan.

"Spyro? Are you there?"

Legend took a soft breath, slowly raising up as he saw Nina making her way into his room. He tried his best to hide the worry on his face, but even the smile and kind eyes he forced through wasn't enough to fool his mother. Nina frowned, a concerned look in her eyes as she sat down.

"You alright, Spyro?" she asked, gently placing a paw on the back of his head. "Do you want to talk about the dream last night?"

Spyro glanced down. From what Nina had said this morning, it sounded like she only saw the part where he was mourning Ignitus. He wasn't sure if she knew who it was he was mourning, but just to be safe, he made a quick check of his in-loop memories for what Ignitus was to him in this loop. He closed his eyes, memories flooding back and not making it any easier.

"I-it's nothing," Legend said, giving a sigh. "It's just..."

"I saw the grave stone... You still miss your grandfather, do you?"

Legend shook his head. In a way, it was oddly fitting for Ignitus to be his grandfather in this loop. Though he was grateful for his luck to keep up the masquerade, memories of the time his unawake self had spent with him, combined with his memories of him from the baseline... Legend sighed, closing his eyes as a small tear fell down his face.

"Yes..." Legend muttered, hugging a pillow as he sat up against the wall near his bed.

Nina gave a warm smile, hugging Legend as she gently rubbed his back. "It's alright... To be honest, I'm surprised it took you this long to finally let it out. It's been two years now."

Legend leant his head against his mother, breathing becoming slightly erratic as he tried his best to hold himself together. "I'm sorry... I...I don't know. I thought if I held it in, pretended like it didn't bug me..." Legend said, voice shaking as more tears began to form in his eyes.

"There, there..." Nina said softly, holding him tightly in a hug. "Everyone deals with grief in different ways. The important thing is you're finally letting it out now. Holding things in is never a good thing."

"Yeah. I realize that now..." Legend muttered, hugging Nina tightly.

There was a short pause as Nina held her child, gently rubbing his back as Legend took deep breaths. Finally, Legend sighed before looking up at Nina. "Mom...?"

"Yes, Spyro?"

"Is...is it alright if I stay over at Cynder's today?" Legend asked, looking up with wide eyes. "As in, without my brother being there?"

Nina looked down with a raised eyebrow. "Now, Spyro... You know the rules. Remember what happened the *last* time you two split up?"

"I know. It's just..." Legend muttered, looking down. Taking a deep breath, he looked back up at Nina. "I-I feel like, with me trying to hide my emotions after grandpa died, I...I think I may have been hurting those I care for too..."

Nina blinked before placing a paw to her chin. "...You and Cynder are dating, aren't you?"

Legend went silent, glancing downward. "Was it really that obvious?"

"I've had my suspicions," Nina said with a slight chuckle. "You two always seemed rather comfortable around each other, so I suppose it wasn't too surprising that you would end up together. I'm just a bit miffed that you didn't think to tell your dear old mother about this. What? We're you worried I would object to it?"

Legend shook his head, looking up at his mother as she gave a concerned look. He took a deep breath.

"No. It's just... I don't know," Legend said, glancing back down. "I guess I felt like...like you'd overreact to it..."

"What makes you think I'd overreact?" Nina asked, raising an eyebrow. "Wait, have you two been getting up to some *shenanigans* I need to know about? How serious is this relationship!? Oh, I didn't think I'd have to make Flash give you *that talk* for a few more years now!"

" *Mom!* "

"I'm sorry, sweetie, but you're still my baby, and I'd like to keep it that way for at least a few more years!" Nina said, looking down with a concerned glance. "...Seriously, though, how serious is it?"

Legend sighed, his expression going flat as he placed a paw over his forehead. "We just cuddle, okay? Nothing like *that* ..."

Nina breathed a sigh of relief, wiping some sweat off her forehead. "Thank goodness. For a second, I was worried that I might end up as in-laws with Edna," she muttered, though she was quick to pause as she stared off blankly. "Wait... Exactly how do you know what *that* is? Is there something more I need to know about this?"

Legend blinked, scratching the back of his head as he began scouring his loop memories for anything that could help him out. Having been lying through his teeth for partially the whole loop so far, it wasn't long before he came up with something that sounded remotely believable.

"One day at school, I think it was about third grade, some random students were selected to bring their parents in to talk about their jobs. One of the more mammalian kids, I don't remember his name, brought in his mother...who was a labor and delivery nurse. A few questions and some curious research later, I figured out why you usually lock the door at night." Spyro bit his lip. "And that's pretty much where I left it."

Nina blinked. "Ah, well. That's a lot...tamer than what I was expecting." She paused. "And...what do you mean *usually* ?"

"Yeah... That would be how my brother found out."

The smirk on Legend's face only got wider as Classic's horrified expression grew. Classic's eyes were wide and his jaw was dropping as he had to be held down in the chair. Now just sitting in place with his face frozen like that, Legend tried his best to suppress a chuckle.

There were many odd tidbits that Legend had learned through his many years of looping, quite possibly the most silliest being when to tell when he wouldn't be able to get out of his parents giving him a certain *talk.* At this point, Legend had heard it enough times to no longer feel awkward when having to go through it, though there were quite a few differences when it came to dragonfly and dragon anatomy that made him flinch slightly. Nonetheless, Legend could easily power through it should it arise. However...

Legend glanced over to Classic with an amused expression. "Oh, come on now. If I have to risk hearing it every other loop, you have to hear it at *least* once."

Classic blinked before he shot his loop brother a glare that could only be described as the 'I am going to *kill* you' look. Legend busted up laughing.

"Hey, look at it this way. It's better you learn now before you're pushing strollers through the park!" Legend said through his

laughter.

Classic blinked before he let out a sigh, rubbing his temples as he looked down.

"Hey... I'm happy you're *finally* starting to lighten up and all, but in the future, could your amusement *not* be at my expense?" Classic asked, glaring at Legend.

"That depends," Legend said, a grin on his face. "I'll try to respect that request, but if you pull anything over on me, then all bets are off."

As Legend's giggles echoed throughout the house, Nina couldn't help but smile. She closed her eyes, taking a deep breath as she took it in. When had been the last time she had heard that Spyro's laugh, heard his carefree tone...? She wasn't sure, but she was glad to finally hear it once more. She may not have approved of Classic's impromptu attempt at dream therapy, but in the end, it seemed like it had worked out for the best.

"Spyros, forgot to remind you!" Nina said, quickly walking into the living room. "Elora's coming to visit. Now, I think I have an idea about how to handle the fact that one of you wants to stay over at Cynder's today," Nina said, before she paused. "Uh..."

"That'd be me," Legend said, an amused expression on his face.

"We started to have people refer to us by nicknames now, Mom," Classic said, a smile on his face. "I'm Spy and he's Ro."

Nina blinked, a blank expression on her face. *'Why didn't we think of that?'* Shaking that thought off, she gave a warm smile. "Alright then. Ro, you can stay over at Cynder's house, but I expect you to be on your best behavior while you're there, and Elora has to stick with you until you're there. Understood?"

"Got it, Mom!"

"Good. Now, Spy, since your brother isn't going to be with you today, you have two options. You can either stay here, or stick with Elora. If it's the latter, *you are not to leave her sight while you're with her.* You got that?"

"Yeah, Mom! You don't have to worry about that!" Classic said, his eyes wide as a wide smile creased his face.

Legend blinked, noting how giddy Classic appeared to be over this decision. Nina smirked, trying to suppress a chuckle. "Now then, she should be here any second. Make sure to be on your best behavior now."

"Alright! I promise!"

Legend could only raise an eyebrow. Classic was sitting up straight with a polite smile on his face. As Nina began to walk away, Classic quickly hopped down, turned around and leant on the couch as he pressed his forelegs against it. Pushing off, Classic stumbled backwards as he awkwardly tried to stand on his back paws, forelegs flailing in the air. Legend blinked, watching blankly as Classic tumbled over backwards.

"...What are you doing?" Legend asked, watching as Classic rushed back towards the couch and attempted to stand once again.

"What does it look like? I'm trying to stand on two leeee-*eeeeeeeeeee—!* "

Legend tried to suppress a chuckle as Classic tumbled over backwards again.

"I can see that, but why?" Legend asked, spreading out on the couch like a lazy cat stretching out.

Classic rubbed the back of his head, a scowl on his face and his eyes tightly closed, a throbbing pain spreading out from his last tumble. Looking up at Legend, Classic averted his eyes.

"Uh, well, you know. Dragons of my world are able to do that, and considering how long I've been looping, and uh...stuff..."

Legend narrowed his eyes, a smirk on his face. "Does this have something to do with this 'Elora' person Mom keeps talking about?"

"W-what!? No!" Classic said, a large blush forming on his cheeks. "I just, uh, I just—"

"It does, doesn't it?" Legend said, a wide grin forming on his face. "I can't believe it! After how much you've expressed disdain for my relationship with Cynder, here you are trying to walk on two legs to impress your crush!"

"I do not have a crush on her!"

"Then why are your cheeks beet red?"

Classic growled, his face unable to hide his true emotions. Legend let out a hearty laugh, rolling over onto his back. Quickly shaking it off, though, he glanced over to Classic, wiping a tear from his eye.

"Relax. I'm not mocking you or anything," Legend said, looking at Classic with smirk. "I just find it amusing how Mr. 'love is a sickness' has a crush, is all."

Classic groaned, face still beet red as his expression began to go flat. He took a deep breath, letting out an annoyed sigh. "Ya know, Ro, you've become a bit of a jerk since the dream last night."

"Hey, you're the one who said you wanted me to lighten up."

Classic scowled, slowly picking himself up as he attempted to stand again, rather awkwardly, on two legs. Legend watched on with a smirk as Classic wobbled his way out of the living room, chuckling as he stretched out on the couch, and yawned as he rested his head on his foreleg.

About an hour had passed since Classic had wobbled off to avoid further embarrassment from Legend. Legend was basking in the warm sunlight that invaded the living room, lounging on the cushions, his tail curled around himself as if he were a lazy house cat, having decided to take a quick nap to further shave off any tired feelings the nightmare had caused. It was then doorbell rang, causing Legend to drowsily open his eyes.

"I'll get it!"

Legend raised an eyebrow as he got up and glanced behind the couch, seeing Classic rushing towards the door on two legs. Halfway there, Classic tripped over himself and fell onto his stomach. Rubbing his face as he glanced over, he saw Legend resting his head on his paws, an amused smirk on his face.

"Shut up *,* " Classic said, picking himself up and heading towards the door at a much slower pace.

Once he reached the door, Classic turned the knob and opened it. Seeing the red-headed faun in front of him, a big grin appeared on his face. "Hey, Elora!"

"Spyro! It's been a long time since I last saw you or your brother," Elora said, a warm smile on her face as she quickly placed a hand on her chin. "Hold on, don't tell me. I may be a bit rusty at telling you two apart, but... You're the one who likes to skateboard, right?"

"Yep, that's me, alright!" Classic said, his grin growing wider and wider by the second.

Resting his head on the top of the couch, Legend chuckled. *'And Spy thought my relationship with Cynder was too sappy.'*

Elora raised her head at the chuckling and turned towards the couch. With a smile, she placed her hand on her hip. "And by process of elimination, you're the one who usually has more common sense."

"Pretty much."

Classic scowled as both Elora and Legend began chuckling to themselves. Elora took a deep breath, patting Classic on the head as she smirked.

"Aw, don't look so down. We're only teasing," Elora said before she made her way into the house.

As soon as she was out of earshot, Classic sighed, closing his eyes as his body went limp. "Yeah... Ha, ha..."

As Elora made her way into the living room, Nina was quick to make her way there and greet the new guest with a smile. "Elora! How have you been? I've heard you've been accepted into the Arcana Engineering Institute at Magic Crafters, and on a scholarship no less," Nina said, a smile on her face. "Your parents must be so proud!"

"Ah, thanks, Nina. It's nothing, though," Elora said, scratching the back of her head as she gave a small smile. "I've just always had a natural knack for magic, I guess."

At this, a hopeful glint appeared in Classic's eyes. Elora was into magic this loop! This was perfect, what with how he had been practicing magic for the past few loops now. If he could impress her with the skills he'd built up, then maybe, just maybe, there might be a chance she'd...

"Anyway, Elora. Care to join us for breakfast?" Nina asked, heading towards the kitchen as she glanced back. "Admittedly, we kind of did bad this morning by having some cake instead of a well-balanced meal, but we were celebrating Spy learning to dreamwalk, so we're willing to make an exception just this once. Still, that's no excuse to skip on it."

"If I'm not intruding, that'd be nice," Elora said, giving a soft smile. "I haven't eaten anything yet because it's been kind of a busy morning,

so if it's not any trouble..."

"It's no trouble at all, dear," Nina said, pausing as she gave a smile. "You've been like family to us for years, so it's the least we can do."

Elora bowed slightly before she quickly headed towards the kitchen. "Thank you, Nina." As she reached the archway that led to the kitchen, she turned around to the two Spyros. "You coming?"

"Uh, yeah! Of course!" Classic said, jumping slightly as he quickly rushed over towards the kitchen.

Legend said nothing, just preferring to look on with an amused grin as he got off the couch and followed. His expression unchanging as he made it through the archway, only one thought crossed his mind as he headed over towards the table. *'This is going to be an interesting breakfast, to say the least...'*

Pulling the chair out and perching on it, Legend glanced over to Classic, said dragon in question trying to sit rather awkwardly in the chair like a normal two-legged being. It took every bit of will power not to laugh as Classic nearly slid out of his chair. Legend looked over to see Flash heading over to the table.

"Oh, Mister Flash! It's good to see you again," Elora greeted, a warm smile on her face.

"It's good to see you again too, Elora," Flash said, sitting down next to the table. "Now then, anyone interested in anything particular? I can make stuffed dumplings, though that may take a while."

Legend blinked. *'Flash can cook...?'*

"That's alright. I'll just have some toast for now," Elora said, about to get out of her chair.

Seeing this, Classic was quick to hop out of his chair, nearly bumping into the table in the process. "Hold on, Elora! I'll get it!"

"Oh, that's okay, Spyro. You don't have to—"

"No, no. I insist!" Classic said, quickly rushing over and holding the chair steady to keep from moving forward.

Elora gave Classic an odd look, but nonetheless sat back down in her chair. "Uh... Okay then. Thank you."

Legend rolled his eyes as Classic ran over to the toaster. *'For someone who hates love, he sure is waiting on her hand and foot.'*

Nina walked over to the table, setting some plates down as she glanced at her husband. "So, Flash... Did you know Spyro has a girlfriend now?"

Legend's eyes went wide, a frown on his face as Flash glanced over to him.

"Really now?" Flash asked, raising an eyebrow as he eyed Legend. A wide smile quickly creased his face. "That's fantastic! Was wondering when you'd finally get one." Flash lowered his head, the smile never leaving his face as he looked Legend in the eye. "So, who's the lucky dragoness?"

Legend blinked, quickly glancing away. "Uh, C-Cynder..."

"Knew it!" Flash said, closing his eyes as he grinned. "Knew you two would eventually end up together. You two have been best friends since you were younglings." Flash raised his head, glancing over at Nina. "I take it that's why you wanted me to give them that certain talk this morning?"

Legend scratched the back of his neck, a bright blush appearing on his face as he looked down. Nina gave Flash a glare, said dragon in question still grinning like an idiot.

"Flash, stop. You're embarrassing him!" Nina said, frowning as she narrowed her eyes.

"Sorry, honey, but I've been waiting for one of my boys to start dating since they mere younglings," Flash said before turning back to Legend. "Just remember, though, you treat her with respect. Don't do anything I wouldn't do at your age."

Nina growled at Flash, quickly turning to Legend. "No, trust me, Spyro. You're still far too young for *half* the stuff your father pulled at your age."

Legend groaned, resting his head on the table as his left eye began to twitch, swearing he heard Classic chuckling in the background. Seeing this, Elora was quick to clear her throat.

"U-uh, maybe we should change the subject..." she said, a half-hearted smile on her face as she raised her index finger.

"Alright then, fair enough," Flash said before quickly turning to Classic. "So, when do you plan on hooking up with someone?"

The toast popped out of the toaster as Classic's eyes went wide. Fumbling to catch the toast, he finally latched onto it and glanced back with wide eyes. Legend smirked, raising his head and resting it in his paw, his eyes narrowing as they locked on to his loop brother.

"Yeah, Spy. Exactly what are your thoughts on relationships?" Legend asked, the devious grin on his face growing wider by the second.

"U-u-uh...w-well..." Classic muttered, eyes darting all around as he nearly snapped the piece of toast in half.

"Flash, knock it off!" Nina said, giving her husband a sharp glare. "He's still a child! He doesn't have to be with anyone just yet!"

"I'm just saying," Flash said, turning towards Nina. "With how much he complains about love being icky, I can't help but worry about him."

Nina let out a low growl, sitting down as she covered her face with her paw. The blush on Classic's face made him look like a Christmas light as he looked down, delicately holding the toast as he walked back over to the table, handing it to Elora while keeping his head down. Feeling the toast being delicately taken out of his paw, his eyes opened wide as he felt a pat on the back. Looking up, he saw Elora giving him a comforting smile.

The goofy smile on Classic's face was uncontrollable as his scales somehow managed to get even redder. Clearing his throat, Classic quickly rushed back over to his chair, sitting down as he placed his paws on the table, the blush refusing to leave his face. Shaking rather stiffly, Classic mentally sighed.

'This is going to be a lot harder than I thought...'

After a rather nostalgic breakfast in which the family and Elora discussed times gone by, be it about how she use to babysit the two Spyros, how much of a pawful Classic was, or just old memories in general, the two Spyro's and Elora stood by the exit of the door.

"Now then, remember, Ro. Once you are at Cynder's house, you are not to leave until either I or Elora come to pick you up," Nina said, giving Legend a stern look.

"Got it, Mom!"

"And Spy, you are to stick with Elora until you return home. Understand?"

"Yes, Mom!"

Legend smirked. As tempted as he was to say he should have no problem with that, he managed to hold it in. Classic had had enough teasing this breakfast to last him the rest of the loop.

Nina crossed her arms, a smile on her face. "Good. You two take care now, and don't cause Elora too much trouble!"

With that, Nina went back inside the house. Elora smirked.

"Well, just like old times, eh?" Elora asked, turning around as she headed towards the gates. Stopping just short, she looked back. "Anywhere you two would like to visit first?"

"I'd just like to head to Cynder's place as soon as possible, if that's okay," Legend said, quickly heading towards the gate. "I have some things I'd like to discuss with her."

Elora raised an eyebrow. "What's the matter? Are you two going through a rough patch?"

"N-no! Of course not! Cynder and I still love each other very much!" Legend said, jumping slightly as his eyes went wide. "It's just...I'm kind of worried about a few things," Legend said, glancing downward with a frown.

Elora gave a soft smile, kneeling down as she placed a hand on Legend's shoulder. "Hey, Ro. Look at me," she said, looking Legend straight in the eyes.

Legend slowly raised his head, meeting her gaze. He wasn't sure what it was, maybe because of the loop, but for whatever reason, he felt an odd comforting feeling in those eyes.

"I'm not sure how long you and her have been seeing each other, but I can only assume not long, or it hasn't been all that serious yet," Elora said, gently rubbing Legend's back. "I won't force you to explain whatever it is you need to talk to her about, but you should know that there's a very big difference between liking someone and a serious relationship. A serious one isn't always easy, and takes a good long while before it can be fully ironed out. Even then, it might not always end well. I can tell you that from experience..."

Elora glanced down, giving a slight sigh while she closed her eyes. Quick to open them again, she looked back at Legend with a smile.

"That said, you shouldn't be worried to pursue one, either. Whether it ends happily or in tragedy, the time between now and then is almost always worth it. If it was meant to be, then it's meant to be," Elora said, getting back up.

Legend blinked, looking up as she crossed her arms with a smile.

"Besides," she added, "from what I remember, you and Cynder were always rather close to begin with. If anyone can work things out to a happy end, it's you two."

With that, Elora turned around and began to head off. Legend blinked, staring off blankly into the distance. There was a small smile on his face as he closed his eyes. He reopened them and lifted his head, coming face to face with a scowling mirror image.

"...What?" Legend asked, tilting his head. "If it's about breakfast this morning, I'm sorry, okay? I'm still new to this whole 'joking around' thing."

Classic narrowed his eyes, on all fours as he looked Legend directly in the eyes.

"Wouldn't Cynder be jealous if she found out Elora was sweet on you?" Classic said, his voice containing a large amount of acid.

"Wait, this is about Elora?" Legend asked, raising an eyebrow. "Spy, you don't have to worry about that! I would never even *dream* of cheating on Cynder! Besides, I prefer females of my own species. I'm not interested in her, so don't worry about that, okay?"

"...Alright then," Classic said, turning around and following after Elora with an indifferent expression.

Legend rolled his eyes, though he couldn't help but chuckle. Though they were the same age, it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to say Classic was the younger of the two.

Lorefang was a beautiful city, no doubt. What else would one expect from the Artisan dragons? However, no matter how well kept a city is, it is inevitable that there would be hazards to avoid treading on. The skill of dodging litter was second nature to Classic...at least, when he was on all four legs. On two legs, well, that was a different story.

Vendors sold food at their carts as crowds of citizens made their way to their various destinations. This hustle and bustle proved to be a nightmare to Classic as he escaped close scrapes with dropped food, puddles, and the unpredictable passerby that brushed past the group, while trying to keep his balance on two paws. The terror that Classic harbored was well-hidden as he maintained conversation with Elora.

"And he just left you hanging like that?"

"Yep, and that's why I never do projects with my classmates if I can help it."

"Tough. You must have been really busy in your enchantment writing classes."

"Eh, it's hard work, I know. But I enjoy learning about magic. Even though I don't have enough natural magic to use it myself, being able to design spells is fun in itself, and when they're working like I intended, I can't help but smile."

With that, a grand idea burst into Classic's mind. *'So far I've been putting the armor project off for too long. If Elora and I could work on it together, she'll hang out with me more often, I can learn how to write spells with someone I really like, and Legend'll have a set of armor again! Everybody wins!'*

Legend looked on with a smirk, watching as the goofy grin on his brother's face got wider and wider as the conversation went on. Rolling his eyes, he began to observe the vast surroundings of 'Lorefang', the buildings reaching up high into the sky as those odd 'mini-UFOs', as Classic called them, flew overhead. Sure, Legend had seen this all before, but it wasn't until today that he started taking it all in.

Legend's pace began to slow as his eyes opened wider and wider at his surroundings. He began to circle as he walked, looking at gatherings of beings from different species walking around, going about their daily lives, completely unaware that this reality was created from a merge between his and Classic's worlds. There was no war, species co-existed peacefully, and there was no lust for power anywhere. Heck, Legend swore he actually saw a few apes walking amongst the other species, not attempting to attack or rip them apart in any way, shape or form.

A grin appeared on his face as the realization finally began to take hold. This was a world where the war had never happened, a world of peace, a world where Cynder wasn't recognized as nothing but the 'Terror of the Skies.' With an extra spring in his step, Legend continued to look around.

'I wonder if Cynder has realized that yet? If she hasn't, then that should be the first thing I should tell her when I talk to her today.'

Legend took a deep breath, the air fresh despite the cramped surroundings. A big smile on his face, he looked over towards the crowd, many of whom were talking into those odd devices he had never really understood. Legend shook his head. Even if he didn't get the hang of what those things were about, there was still so much he could do now, like...

...Like...

'...Uh...'

Legend paused, the smile slowly leaving his face as he looked around. What was he supposed to do now, considering there was no war to prepare for? He blinked, racking his brain for ideas as the world began to feel like it was spinning around him. He had said it before and realized it many times, but it was only now that it really hit home.

All he really knew was the war. Sure, Classic had tried to teach him some activities before, like those 'video games,' but he still refused to put his claws in *that* position, which made playing them a bit awkward, and there was absolutely no way he would ever set paw on a 'skateboard' ever again. Legend took a deep breath, sitting down on the sidewalk as he grasped his head in his paws. There was so much he *could* do now, and yet, try as hard as he might, he couldn't think of a single thing.

"Excuse me, sir?"

Legend snapped out of his near coma-like state at the innocent sounding voice, looking down at a small lion-like creature in a toga.

"Would you like to sample our specialty Spanakopitas? We promise that they will not disappoint."

Legend blinked before looking around. Realizing that Classic and Elora were nowhere to be found, he shook his head. "Um, no thanks. I have to find my friends—"

"Nonsense, sir! Here, just take it with you. Consider it a head-start on lunch at Burek's Villa. Come again, yes?"

Legend decided to humor him and accepted the warm pastry. "Thank you."

"Yes, yes, and tell your friends, yes?" With that, the lion let Legend be.

Just as Legend rose on his hind paws again, another peddler appeared. This time, it was a seal. "Free sushi?"

As he opened his mouth to refuse, Legend's paw was opened and the determined employee forced a roll of rice and fish into it. "It's on us, and remember to visit Sebastian's Sushi Bar, okay?"

"But—"

Despite Legend's attempt to protest, a wave of free samples crashed upon him. Hors d'oeuvres piled up and Legend was forced into an upright position, his copious balance training from the elders being the only threshold that kept him from falling to a messy demise. Unable to fly, Legend staggered through the crowd, the ridiculous display enough to part the onlookers. Finally he came upon Elora and Classic, the latter bragging about his exploits in magic.

"I also came up with this water shield that doubles as an accelerator for the natural healing process."

"Whoa, that's amazing! You've gotta show me that sometime!"

"Excuse me!"

Both participants in the conversation looked towards the walking gallery of culinary dishes with alarm and disbelief.

"A little help, please!?"

Elora rushed forward to lighten Legend's load while Classic looked on in shock. Since when did Legend know how to walk on two legs so well, and why didn't he do it all the time? He was able to balance almost fifteen dishes on his upright body, for Pete's sake!

"Uh, Spy? Are you going to help me?"

"...Yeah, Ro. Just keep your scales on, I'm coming." As Classic spoke, jealousy laced his voice.

Of course his brother had to be a professional acrobat, and Elora would probably be talking about it the whole day once Legend was freed from his edible bonds. Today was his day, not Legend's, and it didn't matter whether Legend was showing off or truly did get attacked by free samples of doom. Classic needed to get this day right, otherwise he could kiss his prospects of a relationship with Elora goodbye.

"And that's what happened?"

Legend looked on at Elora with an indifferent expression, occasionally taking glances at the death glares Classic was giving him. Shaking his head, Legend looked up at Elora.

"It's true, I swear it! Those salesmen were out of control!" he said, taking a deep breath. "Before I even knew what had happened, they were on me in a second!"

Elora's expression softened and she pulled Legend into a hug. "Aw, you poor thing. I'm surprised at how well you managed to hold on to all that, considering you still can't walk on two legs yet."

"I can walk on two legs!" Classic said, quickly heading over to the group.

Elora looked over, raising an eyebrow. "...Oh! So you can! That's great." Elora closed her eyes as she gave a sheepish smile. "To be honest, I didn't really notice until now."

Classic's expression went flat as Elora picked herself back up. She crossed her arms, giving a small smile. "Now then, after that little mass mobbing, you two want any ice cream to help calm you down? My treat!"

Legend took a glance at the cold glare Classic was giving him. Shaking his head, he turned back to Elora.

"That's okay," Legend said. "I'd just like to head over to Cynder's before any more peddlers try to force more free samples on me."

Elora chuckled, giving a grin. "Okay then, fair enough."

As Elora began walking away, Classic shot Legend a glare. Legend was quick to raise his paws in front of him.

"Now, Spy, remember what I said this morning. I have no interest in Elora. I swear I wasn't trying to upstage you or anything," Legend said, letting out a sigh. "Ancestors know what happened to me there had to be one of the more embarrassing things to happen to me so far."

"Yeah, well, you didn't have to put on a freaking balancing act with those plates," Classic said, crossing his forelegs. "Where did you even learn to balance like that? I thought you guys were supposed to be strictly four-legged?"

"It's a training exercise in my world," Legend said, beginning to head after Elora when he noticed her walking off into the distance. "Though we can't walk on two legs like dragons of your world can, there are some techniques and abilities that require us to briefly stand on two paws. Learning to balance things while on two paws helps us keep from losing our balance while performing those techniques in battle."

Classic groaned, slowly walking forward as he followed Legend. "Still, you could have just let 'em drop. No need to turn yourself into a three ring circus."

Legend glanced upward, a small smirk on his face. "I guess that had to do with me being taught to never waste food. Though it's plentiful here, in my world, we usually have to hunt for our food on a daily basis," he said, glancing back to Classic. "Besides, no need to worry. Once I'm dropped off at Cynder's, I won't be in your way any longer."

Legend grinned, looking forward as he closed his eyes. "You'll have Elora all to yourself. Just be careful not to catch that dreaded love bug you hate so much."

Classic groaned, a luminescent blush on his face. "You know, Ro, I'm beginning to think I liked you better when you were more serious."

"Again, you're the one who wanted me to lighten up."

The group of three soon came upon Cynder's house, and Legend quickly noticed the burn mark on the front lawn. He narrowed his eyes before looking back up at the house. Classic raised an eyebrow as Legend began to sniff the ground.

"Spyro? What's wrong?" Elora asked, glancing over towards Legend.

"I'm not sure... Spy, would you mind coming with me for a second?" Legend asked, glancing at Classic.

"What? Why?" Classic asked, crossing his arms.

"These marks. They look like they could be signs of a struggle. After hearing about Ember nearly being mugged, I don't want to take any chances," Legend said, a serious expression on his face as he looked back towards the house.

"Ember was mugged!?" Elora exclaimed, placing a hand over her mouth.

Classic's eyes widened at Legend's words, jaw nearly dropping. Quickly shaking it off, he got back down on all fours, his eyes narrowing.

"Nearly mugged. Luckily Cynder was there to save her, but there might be the chance he came back for a second attempt, or revenge," Legend said, narrowing his eyes.

Elora gasped. "Shouldn't we call the cops then!?" she said, glancing around at the surrounding area with a frown.

"Might just be nothing, though. We shouldn't call them over nothing," Classic said, giving a smirk. "Beside, my bro and I can easily handle it. Just hang here. We'll be back in a few seconds."

Elora raised her hand, but before she could protest, the two purple dragons were off. She held her hand over her mouth again, looking around as she gulped.

The two Spyros went towards the back gate, Classic unlocking it before they made their way down the brief path towards the backyard. Classic quickly pressed up against the side of the house, slowly making his way over to the edge. Nodding to Legend, he poked his head out from the side. When he saw what was going on, though, he blinked.

Ember steadied her nerves, eyes focused on the training dummy as she hunkered down to the ground, claws digging into the dirt as a slight frown creased her face.

"Now!"

On that command, Ember charged forward towards the training dummy, which sprang to life and attempted a haymaker. Ember ducked, using her momentum to swipe at its feet, knocking it off balance and onto its back. The dummy attempted to get back up, but Ember was already upon it, jumping into the air, body curling as she twirled in a spin, slamming her tail down hard on the dummy's chest. Using the force from the impact and spreading her wings, Ember back-flipped off her tail with a beat of her wings, and landed back on the ground with all fours, lowering back down into attack position.

Classic blinked, rubbed his eyes, then blinked again as he looked onward.

"What? What's wrong?" Legend asked from behind him.

Classic shook his head, looking back with eyes wide. "Ro, at any point while we were coming over her, was I hit on the head or something?"

Legend gave him a flat look before walking past him and into the yard. Cynder was watching as Ember preformed several more moves, managing to dodge the few retaliations the dummy made. Legend smiled as he walked up to her.

"Hey."

Cynder turned her head, smiling when she noticed him.

"Hey," she said before turning towards Ember. "You can take a break now, Ember."

With that, the dummy went limp and dropped to the ground. Panting, Ember took a deep breath as she stood up on all fours. With a smile, she headed over towards the group. Cynder smiled at her.

"You're doing really good, Ember. You're still off by a few inches when it comes to some blows, and you're still telegraphing a few of your attacks a bit too much, but besides that, you're getting a lot of this pretty quickly."

At Cynder's compliment, Ember's smile grew a bit wider.

Still watching the scene from the side of the house, Classic could only stare wide-eyed. Finally shaking it off, he headed in to the backyard and towards the group of dragons. Noticing him slowly approaching, Ember blinked.

"Oh, hi, Spyro!" Ember said, though she quickly paused.

"Hey..." Classic said, stopping a distance away with an apprehensive look on his face.

Ember blinked, her smile fading and soon replaced with a frown. "Spyro... If you're worried about—"

"Oh, no! No! It's not that!" Classic said, waving a paw in front of himself. Sitting down, he blinked. "I was just...wondering what was going on."

Cynder raised an eyebrow, looking between Ember and Classic with a blank expression. Taking note of the small frown forming on Ember's face and Classic shuffling around awkwardly, Cynder cleared her throat. "Ember asked me to teach her how to defend herself."

"Okay..." Classic muttered, looking on with an odd look. "...Does this have to do with that mugger?"

Ember sighed, shaking her head. "Kind of," she said, raising her head as she looked back at Classic. "That mugger was sort of a wake-up call. It made me realize that the loops aren't always going to be the safe norm we're used to, so it's better to learn how to defend myself now before something even worse than a mugging happens."

"Ember, you don't have to do that," Classic said, walking a bit closer to the group. "I'm always ready to protect everyone, and I'm sure that Ro and Cynder will do the same if they're there."

"That's *if* they're there, Spyro," Ember said, closing her eyes. "Spyro, you said there were variants where you were more or less by yourself. What if that happens to me? If I end up in another world where I'm by myself, and have to defend myself..." Ember reopened her eyes, looking at Classic with a small frown. "I want to be able to defend myself, if only to give me some peace of mind."

Legend looked between the two, raising an eyebrow at the growing look of apprehension on Classic's face. He turned to Cynder, who took the subtle hint to break the awkward silence. She cleared her throat.

"By the way, Spyro," Cynder said to Legend, a smile on her face. "It's a good thing you're here. I was wondering if you'd be willing to tutor

Ember in using the fire element. I would, but uh...you know, not a fire dragon."

Legend nodded, giving a wide smile. "Sure, no problem. I was planning on spending the day over here, anyway. If that's okay, of course."

"Fine with me. Aren't you suppose to stick by Classic, though?"

"Nina said it was alright because an old in-loop friend of ours is here today. I can stay here while Spy sticks by Elora," Legend said before turning to Classic. "Speaking of which, you might want to hang around for a bit before going back to her. From what I understand, you don't have much in the way of training when it comes to fighting, so—"

"Hey, what do you mean I don't have any training?" Classic asked, narrowing his eyes.

"Well, I mean, I could only assume from what I've seen of you in action before."

"I've been trained in how to fight, I'll have you know!" Classic said, standing up on two legs as he pointed to himself. "I'll have you know I was trained in the art of Dragon Kata!"

"Dragon what-a?" Legend asked flatly, tilting his head.

"Dragon Kata," Ember cut in. "It's a special kind of fighting style in my world that relies on using one's 'chi' to focus energy into physical blows." She glanced down. "I actually tried to learn it before, but...Ragnar refused to teach me."

"Yeah, Ragnar has a bit of a stick up his you-know-where when it comes to teaching others his techniques," Classic said, rolling his eyes. "Could you believe he didn't even want to teach me at first, despite the fact that our realm was slowly being engulfed into the

Shadow Realm and Dragon Kata was the only thing that could hurt the shadow beasts? Yeah. He's that secretive about them."

Legend tilted his head, placing a claw on his chin. "Would you mind demonstrating some of it?"

Classic smirked. "No problem! Watch this!"

The trio watched as Classic began to go through the many moves he had learned over the course of these loops. Legend blinked, recognising some notable similarities to the style he had perfected throughout his many loops. He did note how Classic's attacks appeared wilder than his own, able to poke out some openings Classic was unwittingly leaving for himself. Classic jumped and spun in the air before slamming his tail into the ground, and got back onto all fours with a smirk.

"See? What'd I tell ya?" Classic said, looking over to the group.

"Impressive," Legend admitted, but he quickly shook his head. "Though it seems pretty basic. I'm not saying it was bad, but are you sure you don't want to learn any more advanced styles?"

"Hey, what do you mean it's basic?" Classic said, narrowing his eyes.

"All I'm saying is, though some of those attacks seemed pretty solid, they still tend to leave you wide open in a fight. Besides, some of those attacks seemed pretty outlandish, so..."

Classic huffed before getting on two legs once again. Ember's eyes went wide at the sight. While she wondered when her Spyro had learned to walk on two legs, Classic smirked as he held his forepaws in front of him.

"Okay then, if my style is so basic, then can you do this?" Classic taunted as a faint glow began to illuminate between his paws.

Not a second later, a ball of blue energy appeared between his paws. The trio's eyes went wide at the sight. Classic smirked before turning to the training dummy in the yard. Resisting the urge to yell 'hadoken', Classic fired the ball of energy at the dummy, sending it tumbling back.

Legend blinked. Shaking his head, he put a claw to his chin. "Was that the whole 'chi' thing Ember mentioned?"

"Yep!" Classic said, a cocky grin on his face. "Haven't really done much with it, to be honest, but still cool regardless, huh?"

"It is impressive, though, as you pointed out, you still appear to be learning it," Legend said, raising a claw. "I can notice several telegraphs of what you're about to pull in your movements, and while that whole chi orb thing was impressive looking, it moves too slow and is too flashy to be a useful projectile attack. An enemy can easily spot it from a good distance away and move before it even gets close to hitting them."

Classic frowned, body going limp as his left eye twitched slightly.

Ember giggled, placing a paw in front of her mouth. "Either way, I hope one day I'll be able to figure out a way to convince Ragnar to let me learn it. Would be really nice to know one of the fighting styles of my world."

Classic perked up slightly, a sudden spark in his eyes. "You know, if you want, I can teach you later. Despite what mister telegraph over there says, I've been using it long enough that I'm sure I can teach others about it."

"Really?" Ember asked, raising an eyebrow. "You'd be willing to do that?"

"Of course. Why wouldn't I?"

"It's just that, after how...well...you know..."

Classic took a deep breath, nonchalantly waving his paw in front of himself. "Ember, you need to stop worrying about that. We're just friends now, right?"

"Yeah. We're just friends."

"Then you don't have to worry about how things were early on in the loop," Classic said, giving a smirk as he walked up to her. "What's in the past is in the past...or whatever accounts for past in this warped sense of time."

Ember giggled, looking at Classic with a smile. Legend could only raise an eyebrow at the display. Shortly after, he narrowed his eyes as he placed a paw to his mouth. A slight smirk slowly began to crease his face.

"Hey, guys? You okay back there?" Elora's voice echoed out as she slowly poked her head out from behind the side of the house. "...I'm not going to have to call the police or anything, am I?"

"No, Elora. Everything's fine! Just a false alarm!" Legend said, giving a smile as he waved at the faun.

Cynder blinked before she turned to Legend. "What's she talking about?"

"Oh, right. For some reason, there was a burn mark out on the front lawn," Legend said, looking back at Cynder, completely oblivious to her flinching. "We thought there may have been a fight or something going on."

"Oh, uh, that! Yeah, that was, that was, uh..." Cynder said, a rather half-hearted smile on her face as she stumbled over her words. She jumped slightly before pulling Legend in closer.

"...That was a failed attempt at teaching Ember how to use her element. It didn't exactly go well, so it's best not to bring it up if you

can," Cynder whispered before she backed away with a half-hearted grin.

Legend tilted his head at the display, but nonetheless gave a smile as he nodded. Cynder breathed a sigh of relief, body relaxing as she gave a more genuine smile.

"Anyways, I should probably go now. Elora's waiting for me," Classic said, turning around and heading towards the gate. "See you later tonight," he added, turning around for a brief second as he raised his paw.

"Good luck, Spy. Remember, don't do anything Dad wouldn't!" Legend taunted, a sly smirk on his face.

Classic's expression went flat as he walked off, and the two dragonesses gave Legend an odd look. Shaking it off, the extra spring in Classic's step returned and he got back up on two legs as he rounded the corner. It didn't matter how much teasing Legend gave him. Today was going to be a good day. Soon, Elora and him would be together and then she'd start looping, and everything else would be good...

(A/N: Classic, you should really know better by now given how the multiverse is... Who knows, though, maybe things will actually work out for them in the upcoming chapters? Also, bit odd at how upset Classic was over the idea of Ember learning to defend herself... Wonder why that is?

Eh, at the very least, Legend and Cynder's 'date' should go by just fine. Yeah.

Anyways, hey guys. Right off the bat, I want make something perfectly clear.

This fic is a collaborative fic. Even though I'm the head writer, others are also submitting snips and working alongside me on

the mega arc above.

This is something I really wanted to point out, because a lot of people still seem confused on this, despite me saying so multiple times in the past. Generally, if it has (Feat: username) or (Feat: username, additional username) next to the loop number, that means someone else wrote it and submitted it, or several authors also had a hand in it as well.

Other than wanting to make the above more clear, there's not much to say in this chapter A/N for a change. AbZ had something he wanted to say in response to a few reviews, though, so take it away, AbZ:

"Hey, saw the reviews and just wanted to chime in. On the question of the Guardian's powers from the review in Chapter 16, short answer: yes and no. Longer answer: the Guardians still have many tricks and advanced techniques that they have not shown Legend at the time of the loop in question. This is because, from their perspective, Legend is still a child. A very respectful and powerful child to be sure, but still a child. There are dangers and unforeseen consequences when training and using the skills in question. From the non-looping Guardians' perspective, Legend has no training in their element beyond learning perhaps not thirty minutes before that he can use it and what skill experimentation in that timeframe can give.

They are hesitant to teach a child their most powerful abilities because, though he seems responsible, if they're wrong, they can't take it back. They are already fighting one power-mad purple dragon, they don't want to help create another one... One that they probably will not be able to fight against at their best (for sentimental reasons), much less win against. So they want to be sure of their understanding of his personality before they advance his training. Had Legend's baseline loop gone past when it does, they'd probably start on some of the really advanced stuff.

Also, Legend is still physically a teen at the end of his loop. It is quite possible that some of the techniques that the Guardians have are only as effective as they are because of the fact that they are adults. (Remember the Fire Lance Dive in the Arms and Armor Loop? If Legend uses the technique, it'd probably classify as anti-armor, maybe anti-tank. When Ignitus uses it, it is full stop anti-material. It's just physics. If Legend and Ignitus can reach similar speeds in a dive [long story short, without outside propulsion/or loop shenanigans they do], Ignitus is always going to do a lot more damage because he's just that much more massive. Now, on the other hand, if Spyro wanted to fudge it a bit by using his time powers to speed himself up further...) The technique might strain muscles that haven't yet been developed in a dragon of Spyro's physical age. And, like it or not (and they most certainly don't), they cannot afford Spyro to be injured in training while there is a war to fight.

Then you also have to remember Legend Spyro's personality, because it does play a big part here. Legend is very respectful of his teachers and wants their approval. (We can argue about the specific reasons at a later date on a different forum if you are interested.) He does want to learn everything his masters have to teach him but, at the same time, he wants to earn those lessons. He doesn't want them because the Guardians feel that they would be the only way for him to survive, or that they were fast-tracking him because he's "special." He wants to know that every technique he has, everything that he's been taught, has been because he's earned the right to be a worthy successor to his teacher in that technique.

However, when it comes to raw potential, he eclipses his teachers in just about every way."

Bonus note: 'Tejedor' is *suppose* to be Spanish for 'Weaver'. Originally the word put there was 'tejedorito', but looking it up in Google translate pointed out that it was wrong. I know Riv was confused about that, and when I tried to look it up I couldn't

find the definition for it in the search engine it brought up nothing so... Yeah. Apparently we're just that bad at Spanish to overlook that. :P /shot)

Nobody expects the Spyra inquisition!

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Chapter title courtesy of Masterwaver. Further comments below.)

Classic 19.1: (Feat: Masterweaver)

"That dragon's a Spy!"

Spyro gave a mental groan as every single human aimed their weapons at him. "This loop is crazy."

He braced himself as the barrage launched, only slightly happy knowing his death wouldn't be permanent.

Legend 19.2:

Spyro walked down the halls of the Dragon Temple, helping oversee its rehabilitation for who knows how many times at this point. At the very least, it seemed to get easier the more he learned about controlling the earth element. It was much easier to make repairs when you could turn the rubble into concrete and morph it back to where it had broke off from. Sparx's suggestion to use fire to clear the vines went mostly ignored, for understandable reasons.

So far the loop had been pretty much standard. Cynder was awake and had once again escaped the Mountain of Malefor to help out with the war efforts. Sparx was also awake, currently yammering loudly about how trying to trick the apes into an otherworldly experience would *totally* help stop the war, and Ignitus was busy keeping Volteer and Cyril from attempting to ring each others' necks for the thousandth time in a row.

Spyro sighed. It was always a short reprieve during the time Cynder would normally be cleansed in the baseline to the time the Night of Eternal Darkness arrived, and it was a reprieve he openly enjoyed.

Living in a baseline ruled by war rarely gave him the chance to rest, so when the rare opportunity popped up, he was always quick to take it.

'Wonder what Cynder's up to?' Spyro thought, pausing for a few seconds. He shook his head. ' *Probably trying to get the wash room working again. It's always been one of her preferred ways of relaxing during this mess.'*

With that thought in mind, Spyro began to head back down the hallway.

"Spyro?"

Spyro paused, turning around to see Ignitus standing by one of the doorways. Spyro gave a smile, turning around and heading towards him.

"Yes, Ignitus?" Spyro asked, sitting down. "You alright? The loops getting to you again?"

"No, no. I think I've finally managed to adjust to it," Ignitus said, waving a paw in the air and putting it back down as he glanced at Spyro. "To be honest, though, I'm a bit concerned about you."

"Hm? Why?" Spyro asked, tilting his head.

Ignitus sighed, closing his eyes. "As much as I hate to admit it, in all this time of retrogression, I have only been thinking of myself. I am supposed to be your mentor, and yet I am not sure I am older than you anymore..."

"Ignitus, it's alright. It takes a lot of time to get used to the loops," Spyro said, walking over and patting one of Ignitus' paws.

"Even still, I should be the one comforting you," Ignitus said, lowering his head. "Spyro, you said as the 'anchor' you were awake from the start. Exactly how many loops have you done since then?"

"Well..." Spyro said, placing a claw to his chin. "I've long since lost count of how long I've actually been looping. I've started up a new system, though, to give some idea based on the last major variant we had." Spyro looked up at Ignitus. "I believe the last major variant was around two hundred and fifty-something loops ago."

Ignitus' eyes went wide as he tried to keep his jaw from dropping. He closed his eyes, mouth curled into a frown. "I am truly sorry about this, Spyro..."

"It's not your fault, though," Spyro said, standing up. "From what I heard, not even the admins are sure what caused the damage to Yggdrasil. As far as anyone knows—"

"Even if I am not the cause, that doesn't change the fact that I have done nothing to help," Ignitus said, shaking his head. "We needed to rely on you in the baseline because we were far too weak to stand up to Malefor and, because of it, we need to rely you in these times, forcing you to experience the trauma of war...time and time again."

"Really, Ignitus. It's okay!" Spyro said, spreading his wings and hovering up to about eye-level with Ignitus. "There's not much in the war that still causes problems for Cynder and I. Really, trying to figure out how to stop the war earlier is probably the one thing that's kept me sane all these loops."

Ignitus raised his head, looking Spyro in the eyes. "Spyro, has that been all you've done during the loops so far?"

"Outside of variants... Yeah," Spyro said, an odd look on his face. "Why? Shouldn't stopping the war be the first thing I should do during baseline loops? I mean, it's not like I don't get to relax and have some fun during the rare variants."

"Spyro, while stopping the war is important, a dragon your age should not be obsessing over it," Ignitus said, though he quickly caught himself. "Or, at least, a dragon that appears your age, at any rate."

"I... I don't understand," Spyro said, face curling in confusion. "I'm not obsessing. I let myself have a break during peaceful variants. I'm better than I was before I met the other Spyro."

Ignitus blinked, but quickly shook it off. He still didn't fully believe this 'other Spyro' story, but regardless, for Spyro's own good, he decided to play along.

"Even so, Spyro, that doesn't mean you should be afraid to take breaks even when things play out like baseline," Ignitus said, expression softening with a smile. "With Cynder no longer influenced by the Dark Master, there is no reason for you two to travel to the Mountain of Malefor."

"Uh...yeah. About that..." Spyro said, looking down while scratching the back of his head.

Ignitus shook his head. "All I'm saying is, Spyro, you shouldn't be afraid to take sometime off now and then; have a little fun. After everything you've been through, you deserved it long, long ago."

"Ignitus..." Spyro said, glancing back up at his mentor. "I'm...I'm not even sure if I can leave, to be honest. I'm needed for so many things. Only I have enough power to beat Malefor, and I'm needed to pull the planet back together at the end of the loop. Even if I wanted to...I don't I could take a break unless I can figure out how to end the war early."

Spyro landed back on the ground, sighing. Ignitus looked on with a soft frown, raising a paw and gently placing it on Spyro's back.

"Well, then... At the very least, you shouldn't be afraid to blow off some steam. From what I hear from Sparx, you rarely ever diverge from the baseline, even after this meeting with the...uh...other Spyro," Ignitus said, pausing to clear his throat at the mention of the supposed other Spyro.

Spyro's immediately lifted his head, looking up at Ignitus with a raised eyebrow. Ignitus chuckled, meeting his eyes with a smile. "What's the matter, Spyro?"

"Nothing... It's just, I hear that from Sparx all the time, but I never expected you to say something like that," Spyro said, narrowing his eyes. "Did Sparx put you up to this?"

"No, no, Spyro," Ignitus said, taking a deep breath as he closed his eyes. "Believe it or not, I speak from experience. The job of a guardian is a stressful one, Spyro, even counting the war out." He opened his eyes. "It's always been that way for longer than the war has gone on, and sometimes some...creative methods must be taken to help keep the stress we're put under from getting to us."

Spyro stared up at him in disbelief. Ignitus chuckled.

"I don't expect you to believe me. But, at the very least, consider my words," Ignitus said, getting up. "I know back when things were less dire than they are now, we'd often give each other subtle hints that we were getting on each others' nerves."

As if on cue, two dragons roared out as the sound of a catapult launching was heard. Not a second later, both Cyril and Volteer came rushing out into the hallway, faces covered with various bits of fruit and their juices. Cyril narrowed his eyes.

"Excuse me, Ignitus, but...did we not agree that we wouldn't pull anything like this while Spyro was here?" Cyril asked, fruit dripping from his scowling face.

"Excuse me, Cyril, but I also recall a certain two dragons agreeing to put their differences aside while Spyro is here as well," Ignitus said, a small smirk appearing on his face.

"I hope that you are not insinuating that the binary of us have a conjoined paw in this act?" Volteer asked, glaring at Cyril. "I will have you understand, I was upholding our most cherished of

arrangements. It was the pompous egomaniac standing at my side that had the audacity to assert the foremost gesture!"

"Oh really, mister thesaurus?" Cyril asked, narrowing his eyes as turned his head towards Volteer. "I will have you know, I was merely trying to educate dear Cynder on the regal history of my line. It was this gibbering idiot here who had the audacity to butt in."

Ignitus rolled his eyes as Volteer and Cyril began to argue once again, their voices ringing throughout the temple. Spyro didn't really pay attention to it, though, as he just stared on blankly at the fruit juices dripping off the elders' faces. He was quick to be reminded of the loop where he had replaced Ignitus and how Terrador had subtly warned him that he would dunk him in the lake headfirst if he didn't tell the truth and relax...

Spyro shook his head. One thing was for sure: he had a lot of thinking to do.

Classic 19.3:

There were many minor annoying things loopers just had to learn to get used to about the loops, especially when it came to variations—be it the world you're looping into being generally unpleasant, some villain that always remains a pain no matter how many skills you've built up in this retrogression of time, or something as simple as swapping one's gender.

'Spyra' groaned, trudging along the plains of Crocovile Swamp with her tail dragging on the ground. With an annoyed look on her face, she rolled her eyes.

'A looper has a chance to loop in as the opposite gender around two percent of the time...' Spyra thought, mouth curled into a scowl. *'Uh, yeah. Might want to update that chapter of All about Looping , Admins.'*

Spyra shook her head, pausing as she closed her eyes. It wasn't so much being turned into a girl more frequently than the average looper that was annoying. No, comparatively little changed in regards to being the opposite gender, much to his-slash-her surprise. 'She' still remained a hero, she was never put at a disadvantage because of her gender, and people rarely treated her differently in regards to gender. However, despite that, there was still one tiny detail about these loops where he was female that made them a nightmare.

Spyra turned her head towards Sparx, a flat expression on her face. "Sparx, why am I the only one who has to deal with this? Despite all the loops we've been through together, only *I've* ever ended up as the opposite gender, and I'm pretty sure that statement stands true for the other loopers also involved."

"Hey, look on the bright side, *Spyra* ..." Sparx said, trying to hide the growing grin on his face with his hands. "At least you don't have to worry about Ember hitting on you when she isn't awake."

"Not helping, Sparx."

Spyra let out a low growl, continuing her trek through the swamp and entering the deepest parts of the forest. Luckily, even though it didn't matter in terms of her hitting on him when unawake, Ember was awake this loop. It was lucky because Ember had promised to help ease the one thing that made this loop hell for him-slash-her.

Glancing up, Spyra saw that dreaded Dark Gem off in the distance. Taking one quick glance around and noting that the only other being around was Sparx, she sighed. Maybe, just maybe...

"What's cooking, good lookin'?"

Spyra froze, left eye twitching at the sound of a voice she'd hoped she wouldn't hear. Turning around and giving a mock smile, she saw a certain red dragon standing in front of her.

"Oh, Flame, what an *unexpected* surprise," Spyra forced out, trying her best to keep her eye from twitching. "Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't your sister want to spend time with you today? Shouldn't you be *looking after her?* "

"Eh, the squirt'll be fine," Flame said, nonchalantly waving his paw in the air. "I can hang out with her any day. She'll be mad that I ditched her, but I'll get her a plushie or something later." Flame grinned, his eyes narrowing. "You, however... It's not every day such a hot dragoness such as yourself comes to Dragon Village."

Spyra shuddered, taking a few steps back while Flame slowly inched closer.

"R-really? Come on now. Surely now there's some other dragoness you're interested in," Spyra said, glancing away as she chuckled nervously.

"Not really. The only other dragonesses I know are either my sister or way older than me," Flame said, shaking his head. He looked back at Spyra with a goofy grin. "That said, even if I did know any others around my age, you'd still be the amethyst rose in a garden of weeds."

Spyra mentally groaned at the cheesy pick-up line, shooting Sparx a glare that screamed 'you can help me now, you know!' Sparx merely smirked, looking down with eyes that clearly said 'I know, but this is too funny!' Looking back at Flame, Spyra staggered back when she saw he was now inches away from her face.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you," Flame said, walking over and holding out his paw. "Allow me to help you up, m'lady."

Spyra's left eye twitched as she got up, holding her head low as she scowled. Flame appeared unaware of how annoyed she was becoming; he was still just staring at her with that goofy expression. A deep orange glow began to shine from Spyra's throat...

"Flame!" Ember called, an annoyed scowl on her face as she walked through the plains of Crocovile Swamp. She sighed, expression going flat. *'I take my eye off him for* one *second...'*

A bright orange flash lit up the swamp and Ember immediately recognized the location, darting off towards it. Coming up to that certain Dark Gem, she skidded to a stop and stared. Flame lay burnt and bruised on the ground, swirls in his eyes and a silly grin on his face. Glancing up, Ember saw Spyra watching her with an annoyed look on her face, raising an eyebrow. Ember gave a meek grin, slowly tapping her index claws together.

"I'm sorry, Spyro... I have no idea how he escaped," Ember said, looking down.

Spyra sighed. "Just make sure he doesn't escape again. If he comes near me again this loop, I'm going to go full Sakura Syndrome on his tail." Shaking her head, she glanced back up at Ember. "Seriously. What is it with your family and the color purple?"

"Uh... It's our favorite color?" Ember said, a half-hearted grin on her face.

Spyra rolled her eyes, turning around and heading towards the Dark Gem. Ember shook her head and approached Flame. With some difficulty, she got him onto her back and turned to leave.

"Oh, hey, sis," Flame muttered, sounding dazed. "I don't know about you, but I think she's into me..."

Ember groaned, closing her eyes. *'I really,* really *hope I wasn't this annoying to Spyro in baseline...'*

Legend 19.4:

Spyro and Cynder sat next to the Pool of Visions, staring longingly into each others' eyes. Smiling, he leant forward and planted a kiss

on Cynder's head. Cynder smiled, leaning forward and embracing him.

"Spyro? Spyro, where are you?" Ignitus called, walking into the room.

When he saw the two dragons embracing each other and leaning in for a kiss, he froze, eyes wide. Quickly, he cleared his throat. Cynder and Spyro turned their heads and, upon seeing the elder in the room, immediately broke their close embrace, their faces lighting up like Christmas trees. Taking a deep breath, Ignitus took a few seconds to compose himself.

"Ahem... It's a good thing I found you two. There's...there's something important I need to tell you," Ignitus said, taking a deep breath while closing his eyes.

"Uh, y-yeah? What is it?" Spyro asked, attempting to retain a dignified stance in defiance of his rose-colored cheeks.

"Well, you know how you said that the loops aren't always the same? That they have variations on occasion?" Ignitus asked, trying his best to keep a plain expression.

"Yeah, why?" Spyro asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Because..." Ignitus said, closing his eyes as he took a few seconds' pause. "According to this loop...I am your biological father."

Spyro looked up with a blank expression before turning to Cynder. Cynder shrugged before looking back at Ignitus with a confused expression.

"So? What's so bad about that?" Cynder asked, raising an eyebrow. "To be completely honest, I kind of thought you *were* Spyro's father until he told me he was raised by dragonflies."

Ignitus took a deep breath before letting out a sigh and placing a paw to his forehead. "Because, Cynder... According to this loop, I'm *your* biological father as well."

Cynder blinked before she and Spyro looked at each other. There was several seconds of silence and blank staring before they both cringed in realization. Spyro glanced away, placing a paw on his forehead.

'I swear to the Ancestors, these loops just love *messing with me...'*

Fused 19.5:

Legend looked on with both of his paws covering his mouth, tiny giggles managing to sneak through despite it. He was sitting in the living room and Classic was scowling at him.

"You laugh, you *die* ."

Classic's statement only furthered Legend's amusement. Classic let out a groan as he placed a paw to his face. Legend finally took a deep breath, shaking his head before patting Classic on the back, grinning.

"Hey, look on the bright side," Legend said, voice shaky as he tried to suppress his laughter. "At least you get your own room this time."

Classic gave Legend a flat look, eye twitching slightly. Finally, he sighed. "Why, out of the two of us, has this happened to *me* more times than it should?"

Legend took a deep breath, rolling his eyes with an amused smirk on his face. "Can't help you with that. All I can say is I'm glad it hasn't happened to me yet."

Classic growled, shooting Legend an annoyed glare.

"Either way, this loop will be interesting, to say the least," Legend said, laying on his back with a grin. "Might be nice to have a sister for a change."

Resisting the urge to bang her head against the armrest of the couch, Spyra face-pawed. With a sigh, she jumped off the couch and began walking away. *'I wonder if Nina would be opposed to me hiding in my room until this loop is over...?'*

Legend 19.6: (Feat: Masterweaver)

Variant loops.

Ancestors-cursed variant loops.

From the moment he awakened, Spyro could tell that this was going to be a variant loop. The swamp's mushrooms were an odd glowing shade of pink, for one. The songs of the birds were a bit rougher, too. And there was the fact that Sparx, without a trace of irony, was wearing a ratty t-shirt and golden knucklebands.

He'd thrown himself into the in-loop persona, too. "So, main drag, waz tha' plan fer meets with yer flameo brameo?"

Spyro peered over his absurdly large sunglasses. "Are you even listening to yourself?"

"Chill, bra, jus playin' how me parents raised me. Don't go dissin' da brood, capiche?"

"Are you supposed to be a mobster, a rapper, or a Scotsman?!"

"Nah, too young ta be with Capone. Rapping Scottard, ya, that's me." Sparx grinned at his brother. "C'mon, bra, it's tha world we live in. When in Rome, party like Ceaser!"

"I swear if you don't drop this before we meet Ignitus—"

Spyro shut himself up quickly as they rounded the cavern corner. In the back, same as always, was the massive red dragon...

...wearing a backwards baseball cap.

"Fo shizzle," he intoned gravely.

Spyro blinked twice. Then he took a breath, turned around, walked out of the cave and screamed at the sky.

Classic 19.7:

The Professor sat in his laboratory, writing down notes on his clipboard. There was an odd device in front of him. The machine was set up on a tripod like a laser, facing one of the many portals of the realms. He rubbed his chin and tapped slightly on the odd device while he narrowed his eyes.

"Hmm... Maybe, maybe..." he muttered to himself, writing down more notes on his clipboard.

"Yo, Professor!"

The Professor jumped, fumbling the clipboard in his hands. Managing to get a firm hold on it again, he turned around and saw Spyro heading his way.

"Oh, Spyro! Been a while since I've seen you in the loops," the Professor said, adjusting his glasses as he looked back over to the machine.

"Likewise," Spyro said, walking up next to him. Eyeing the machine with a tilted head, he turned back to the Professor. "...Is this what you've been doing all these loops you've been awake for?"

"For the most part," the Professor said, glancing at Spyro. "I was working on a lot of miscellaneous projects before the loops started,

but this is the first serious one I've come up with during the loops."

"Cool," Spyro said, though he narrowed his eyes as he got a better look at the contraption. "...What is it? Some kind of death ray?"

"No, no, far from it!" the Professor said. "Remember how you told me there was a second Spyro floating around the Multiverse?"

"Yeah..." Spyro muttered, slowly raising an eyebrow. "Why?"

"Well, I'm quite interested in meeting him. However, the loops haven't exactly been listening to that request and I'm getting a tad antsy," the Professor said, turning back to the machine. "Hence the device you see before you. I call it the 'Super Portal Enhancer Five Thousand.'"

Spyro blinked. "Um, Professor? Remember what happened the *last* time you made a super portal?"

"Relax. If my calculations are correct, the portal should be directly keyed in to the other Spyro's universe," the Professor said, walking over towards the table and pulling out a few pairs of goggles. "Here, you might need these."

Spyro grabbed the pair of goggles and looked at them with wide eyes before staring at the Professor, who was putting his on.

"So... Exactly how is this supposed to work?" Spyro asked, putting the goggles on and taking a few steps back.

"Well, remember how the super portal took orbs to power it?" the Professor asked, fiddling with the laser-like machine. "This works on the same principle, but instead of orbs to travel longer distances in the realms, I'm going to be using every last bit of energy in my lab to hopefully punch through the barrier of reality itself."

Spyro blinked, taking a few more steps back and glancing around for a quick escape should things go horribly wrong. He remembered

reading somewhere in *All about Looping* that trying to punch through reality barriers in the loops was usually a very bad idea. He hesitated, a blank expression on his face.

'C'mon now, the Professor only just started looping,' Spyro thought, watching as the Professor started to dim the lights. *'I would think punching through reality barriers would take a lot even for the most experienced of loopers. Yeah, at most, the Professor's machine's likely going to explode like most of his 'projects."*

Spyro looked up, seeing a window not far above him. His wings already spread, he gulped.

'Considering he's using all the power in his lab for this, it might be a good idea to head for the hills now...' he thought, looking back down at the machine. *'Question is, would I be able to outrun the ensuing fireball in time? If this is going to be the Professor's biggest explosion ever...'*

Spyro paused, watching as the Professor put his goggles over his eyes. After a few seconds' pause, Spyro sighed, his body going limp. *'Eh, what the hell? Not like I haven't died before in the loops. If this loop's ending early for me, might as well get a front-row seat.'*

"Beginning the experiment!" the Professor called, making his final preparations to the machine. "Everyone stand back."

Spyro lay down on the ground, an annoyed look on his face as he rested his head against his paw. The Professor rushed over to his console.

"Funneling power into the device!"

On cue, the machines in the Professor's lab began to flicker until the only lights were coming from the Professor's supercomputer and the sunlight shining through the windows.

"Powering up the device!"

As the Professor finished those words, the laser-like machine began to glow brightly. Spyro sighed, wondering just how painful the explosion was going to be.

"Beginning the experiment! Countdown engage!" With that, the Professor pressed a few buttons and a barrier began to rise behind the device. A countdown timer appeared on the supercomputer. Rushing over behind the barrier, the Professor called to Spyro. "Spyro, hurry! Get behind the shield!"

Doubting it would help, but nonetheless humoring the Professor, Spyro dragged himself over to the blast shield. As they poked their heads out from behind it to watch, the Professor grinned while Spyro's expression remained flat. The timer ticked down; the Professor looked on in giddy anticipation.

"Five, four," the supercomputer began.

"Three, two," the Professor said, nearly on the edge of his seat.

"One," Spyro deadpanned, resting his head on his paw.

The machine sprang to life in a majestic blue glow as the air itself began to grow heavy. The blue glow grew brighter as the lines on the ground funneling power into it began to glow as well. Finally, a bright blue beam shot at the portal, slamming into it in a bright, blinding flash. On instinct, Spyro covered his eyes with his wings.

As the glowing slowly began to fade, Spyro uncovered his eyes and immediately his jaw dropped. Sitting in the middle of the lab were a very confused-looking Legend and Cynder.

The last thing anyone heard before the loop ended was the Professor proclaiming, "EUREKA!"

Fused 19.8:

Legend awoke sitting down and, right away, everything felt flat-out *wrong.* He nearly slid out of the chair.

"Ugh... I feel like I've been hit in the head by a truck..."

Legend blinked, looking forward as his eyes went wide. The voice sounded like Classic, but sitting in front of him was the furthest thing from a dragon possible. The being looked like Jenny had—a human wearing a purple t-shirt and blue shorts. He had short, purple, messy hair with yellow highlights, and he was giving Legend an odd look.

"...What?" the human asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Is that you, Spy?" Legend asked.

"Depends," Classic said, tilting his head. "That you, Ro?"

It was then that Legend looked down at himself and nearly jumped in realization. He too had been turned into a human wearing blue jeans, a yellow t-shirt, and a purple jacket. Legend looked up at his hair. It wasn't as messy as Classic's, but it was purple and spiky nonetheless. Legend frowned, awkwardly trying to keep from sliding out of his chair.

"What happened? The last thing I remember, Cynder and I were helping repair the temple, then we ended up at some odd...place with you looking at us, and then...ugh," Legend grabbed his head, leaning back in his chair.

"Well, in short...the Professor happened," Classic deadpanned, crossing his arms. He sighed, placing a hand on his forehead. "Of course, when his inventions don't explode, they cause crashes..."

Legend blinked before he began to look around. Classic and himself seemed to be in a small room and, from the look of things out the window, they appeared to be moving along at a brisk pace. Legend looked back at Classic.

"Where are we?"

"Your guess is as good as mine, Ro," Classic said, glancing around the place.

It was then they heard a knock at the door. Both turned their heads towards the door and stared. As the door opened, two more humans stepped through.

One of them, a girl wearing a short black t-shirt that left her bellybutton exposed and a pair of black pants, leant awkwardly against the other human. Her legs were shaking violently as she struggled to stand, and locks of her short ebony hair had fallen in front of her face.

"This may be bold of me to say, but I get the feeling this girl belongs with your group," the other human said, turning towards the girl. "C'mon, one foot in front of the other."

He helped the girl towards one of the seats, setting her down as she awkwardly tried to keep from sliding out of the chair. Legend raised an eyebrow.

"...Cynder?" Legend asked, tilting his head. "Is that you?"

"Unfortunately," the girl replied, nearly sliding out of her chair as she fought to try and get comfortable in it.

"From the hard time she was having, I can only assume you loopers come from a world where you're not normally bipedal," the boy said, sitting down next to Classic. "I assume you're here because of a loop crash? That's usually how most loop into this world."

Legend blinked, raising an eyebrow at the newcomer. "How did you know we were loopers?"

The boy smirked, pulling out a wand. " *Coilous Explorative.* "

At the boy's words, the wand sparked to life and the cabin of loopers began to glow softly. As the group looked themselves over, the boy put the wand away with a smile.

"I can only assume you're still relatively new to the loops," he said, looking at Legend and Cynder, "what with how you have a hard time walking on two legs."

"Well, I wouldn't say we're all that new. This is the first loop where we've been forced to walk on two legs, but we lost track of how many loops we've been through some time ago," Legend explained, frowning as he tried to get more comfortable in his seat.

"Ah. Usually that means you're still young if you only just lost count," the boy said, placing a hand to his chin. "At least, you're young to me. I've been looping for countless millennia now, you see."

Classic raised an eyebrow, looking at the boy sitting next to him. "I'm sorry, but exactly who are you, anyway?"

The boy smirked, pushing his glasses up slightly as he flicked some hair away from his forehead, revealing the lightning bolt scar there.

"Harry. Harry Potter," Harry said, offering to shake Classic's hand. "One of the original seven and the anchor of Hogwarts."

Classic 19.9: (Feat: Masterweaver)

Ember shut her textbook. "Right, I think I've figured it out."

"Yeah?"

"Well..." She waggled a claw awkwardly. "This is just a theory, mind you. But I watched a mockumentary from the hub loops—Mnementh had a copy; it's sort of a popular joke among dragon loopers—"

"Who?"

Ember paused. "...Right, you haven't been to Pern. Long story." She shrugged. "Anywho, the mockumentary speculated that dragons and crocodiles had a common ancestor."

"And what does this have to do with anything?"

"Well... With crocodile eggs, the gender is kind of determined by temperature." Ember shrugged. "I don't know if it's the same here, but apparently your egg was on the edge in baseline."

Spyra groaned. "Of course it was... Why doesn't Ro have to deal with this kind of thing?"

Legend 19.10:

"So..."

"So..."

Sparx placed a hand over his mouth; it was all he could do to keep from busting up laughing. Two dragons stood awkwardly in front of each other, looks of apprehension on their faces. Sparx finally rolled his eyes, taking a breath in hopes of stopping his giggles.

"C'mon, you two. With how much it happens to No Class, you had to expect this would happen at *least* once."

'Spyra' shot Sparx an annoyed glare. She quickly shook her head, placing a paw on her face. If nothing else, she was just glad Classic wasn't here to see this.

The grin on Sparx's face grew wider as he flew up high. "Hey, look at it this way! At least you two don't have to argue over who's going to be the guy when this happens!"

Cynder looked up, 'his' face curling into a scowl.

At this, Sparx couldn't hold it in any longer and he busted up laughing. "Now, now! Just be glad Cynder is apparently a gender neutral name for dragons!"

"Spyro, I know he's your brother and all, but if Sparx doesn't shut up, I swear to the ancestors—"

"Oh, look! Those male hormones already seem to be taking affect!"

Cynder growled, spreading his wings and about to take off after Sparx. Spyra was quick to rush over to him, placing a claw on his back as she shot him a concerned glance. Cynder looked over with a frown before letting out a sigh.

"So... What are we supposed to do now?" Cynder asked, placing a paw on his head. "Wait the loop out?"

"I-if that's what you want..." Spyra said, a frown on her face.

An awkward silence fell over the group. Spyra and Cynder sat next to each other, exchanging awkward glances. Spyra sighed.

"...So, at risk of this happening again, how about no more taunting Spy about his looping predicament?"

"Agreed."

(A/N: Short chapter is short.

Anyways, in case it wasn't blatantly obvious, the 'Spyra' gag kind of got a bit out of hand this chapter. Promise that it won't pop up as much in later chapters. It just kind of took off with Weaver's snip about dragons possibly being related to crocodiles, and we ran with it from there.

Anyways, about Ignitus pranking the other guardians, this is mostly so I can address a certain issue I'm having with the

Legend portion of the loops... Yeah, Legend Spyro may be lightening up, but he still has a long way to go before he's willing to pull pranks in the loops. I'm hopeful that seeing his mentor doesn't always take things so seriously, Legend will realize he shouldn't either.

...Though, also doesn't help that, rewatching the cutscenes of A New Beginning on YouTube, I'm still having a hard time thinking of material for it. The Legend portions might end up remaining more about the characters reacting to odd variants, and the general weirdness of the multiverse at large. That and having some more serious plot lines.

Either way, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and make sure to drop by the Spyro loops Forum because I would like to see what you have to say.

Loop titles:

19.1: (Title courtesy of AbZ) Beats the loop where his parents are the Blue Spy and the Red Pyro.

19.2: Ignitus is wise in very many different fields. Catapults that fling rotten fruit being one of them.

19.3: Apparently, sibling minds think alike.

19.4: The GBA version of TEN readily springs to mind. To be fair though, in this fandom, Ignitus is pretty much *everyone's* father, so...

19.5: Legend, I wouldn't taunt him if I were you. Karma can be a funny thing...

19.6: Variants be weird, yo. /shot

19.7: I can't help but get the feeling this isn't going to be the last time the Professor causes a loop crash...

19.8: Yer' a wizard, Spyro. Both of ya.

19.9: Yeah, Twilight. You might want to add a footnote in your 'loopers have a two percent chance of looping in as the opposite gender' line.

10.10: What did I say earlier, Legend? Karma isn't just a bitch, it's a complete and utter troll.)

Billy Mays would be proud

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments at the end.)

Legend 20.1 (Arms and Armor pt. 4) (Feat: AbZHz101)

Spyro glared at the Conductor aboard his train. The only reason neither he nor anyone else had been able to kill him yet was simple circumstance. This time, the Conductor seemed to be situated somewhere deep within his locomotive, preventing Volteer from an easy shot. And up until now there had never been ample opportunity for either himself or Ignitus to gain speed and tear through the metal shell, or it had been in the tunnels with the damnable thing behind them. Now, though, there would be room enough so long as they could slow the thing down.

Cyril caught his eye and nodded; they had a similar thought process, then. As one they pulled out leaf-shaped short swords and landed kitty-cornered near the center of the arena. Ignitus took to the air as Volteer began zapping the machine which held Terrador. Thankfully, the Conductor took the bait of two dragons close by instead of one. No one ever claimed that apes were the smartest species in the Realms.

The engine screamed as it charged down the two dragons. Then Cyril, who had been the closer, began stepping to the side and, not a breath later, Spyro mirrored him.

Ice had an interesting use this loop. If fire increased force by increasing speed and electricity struck at the point of least resistance, ice was about increasing pressure by decreasing area and slightly increasing mass... Though, increasing mass was more of earth's thing. Ice dragons would channel their element along the edges of the blade, coating it in a sheet ice that extended out perhaps an inch more, but was so thin that it was invisible. They

would also harden the ice to a point where it was as strong if not more so than steel.

The icy blades ripped through the wheels and axels, tearing them to shreds. The engine smashed into the side of the arena, stalled...and Ignitus dived. He obliterated the main body of the engine, then shot through the rock wall before coming out on the other side.

Ignitus grimaced as he saw the hole begin to pour out magma from Boyzitbig. He wouldn't be going back that way. He would have to regroup with the others in a less hostile environment. The base and possible core of an active volcano was not the place for reunions, especially not when it was about to blow. Ignitus could only pray to the Ancestors that they would all make it out of this safely.

Spyro glanced worriedly at the hole that Ignitus had made. Both Cyril and Volteer had told him not to worry and that they would regroup soon, but Spyro still felt uneasy. It was as if there was something that he had forgotten about this part; something that was very significant. But usually nothing much happened over here when Spyro rescued Terrador, discounting the eruption. And, quite honestly, Spyro was getting annoyed at how he just seemed to keep missing Cynder. The more times he missed her, the longer she was trapped as a pawn, and Spyro really couldn't allow that. But for the life of him, he couldn't figure out where she would be...

Wait a minute... The crystal that held some of Terrador's energy was still in the machine. That meant that Cynder was waiting for it. She had probably sent the Conductor for it but, given that she knew the volcano would soon erupt, she likely had a set time to send backup so as not to have everything be ruined by one ape and dragon dying before they had stopped being useful. And the only one she'd trust enough for that in the limited time she had would be... Oh shit.

Spyro watched as Cynder erupted from the shadows on the rail tracks, grabbed the crystal and began to fly off. As she did, Boyzitbig could hold back no longer and a floor of magma rushed for the

surface, forcing Volteer and Cyril to carry Terrador between them. There was nothing that Spyro could do at the moment to help them, but he could stop Cynder. He didn't have time to ask Volteer for his Fury Armor, but he had other ways of channelling convexity.

Spyro took wing after Cynder, forcing himself to drown out the noise and the heat and focus on a memory, a lesson by the last dragon that Spyro ever expected to learn from.

"Calm yourself," Malefor instructed. "We are in essence trying to balance a plate on a needle supported by a needle. If convexity senses any inner turbulence, it will take hold. You have wielded its power before; you know what it feels like. Now, state this: 'I can use convexity. I can call upon convexity in my time of need. I can use it, but I do not need to. It is one skill among many for the job I must do.' Do not give in to your doubts but also do not pay heed to your pride.

"Convexity is known as the Tyrant Toppler, the Oppressor, and the King Maker; all for good reason. Within this history are countless tales of purples and blacks that have overcome an oppressive regime and rule justly for a time before falling and becoming an oppressor themselves.

"Convexity accentuates things that we bury, thus we must show it our whole selves. Granted, I don't know if that is possible, but it is the goal that we must strive for. When you first use it in combat, it might be helpful to state your intention and any relevant factors. If it feels silly talking to air, direct it at someone who will listen."

"I will save Cynder," Spyro stated, focusing on his target. "You are not him." This he said to the shade of this loop's Malefor, who he was sure had a way to watch and listen. "Cynder is not your pawn to use and throw away."

Convexity rushed from Spyro's maw and struck true. Cynder released her grasp on the gem as she returned to her true age and Malefor lost his hold over her actions.

"And he was a better teacher, anyway," Spyro said with a feral grin as he dove after the falling dragon.

Five dragons and two moles watched as Boyzitbig continued to spread ash and lava skyward.

"It defies all logical presupposition," Volteer stated evenly, staring down at Cynder. "And while Spyro's testimony can be taken as evidence toward the claim, we still must consider that this is merely a fabrication with the intention of avoiding consequence."

"I believe her," Spyro declared, stepping forward.

"Spyro," Terrador said with his eyes closed, still processing and weighing what he had just heard. "We are not saying that it didn't happen. But it would be foolish not to think that what we have been told is, in fact, a lie. Up until this point, all we have seen and heard of Cynder has been a leader among the apes' forces. We have seen nothing that would imply coercion of any sort, though if such a ritual as the one that she described was the cause, we have great reason to worry."

The dragons were silent for a time, none moving, all but Cynder wearing matching grimaces.

"At the risk of sounding insensitive," Mole-Yair began, cutting through the tension, "you all have saved my people from the apes' lash and whip. What can we do to repay you?"

"Mole-Yair, we didn't save your people for a reward," Spyro exclaimed, taken aback. "And even if we had, it was your information that allowed us to save Terrador. I'd think any debt between us would be paid."

"Ah, but in saving your companion you also rescued my brother, or is one life not equal to another in this case?" Mole-Yair countered.

Spyro grimaced. To say that they were not equal and that there was no debt would be to imply that Exhumor's life, and thus a mole's, was worth less than Terrador's, who was a dragon—thus insulting the Manweersmalls. But to say that they were equal would put them back into the same predicament that Spyro was trying to avoid. He hated others thinking that they owed him something. That kind of thinking just couldn't end well.

Spyro chafed for a moment before he remembered something that Ignitus had said. In this loop's history, the moles had made the armor that the dragons used.

"Well, there is one thing," Spyro began. "The apes seem to have destroyed my teachers' armors. The ones that we've been using, except for Ignitus's, have all been ones that I happened to scavenge before I met any of them. Not only that, but Ignitus mentioned that dragons about my age would have a personal armor commissioned. I think we'd all be honored if you could forge new sets. Though, since mine actually would be a commission, if you could take my current armours as payment... And perhaps use them in the forging process...?"

Then Spyro realized something and backtracked to amend his statement. "Not all at once, though! We'd be vulnerable if mine was made right now."

"Hmm..." Exhumor grunted, looking over the armor covering Spyro, Volteer and Cyril in a new light. "Reforging something that has already gone though the process would be difficult. It wouldn't do if all it took to ruin a dragon's armor was a gout of flame from a fire dragon."

"...Oh," Spyro muttered.

"What's that 'Oh' for, boy?" Exhumor grunted in annoyance. "I said 'difficult,' not 'impossible.' We'll gladly do it if your teachers agree?"

The last question he directed at the older dragons, who each had varying degrees of a smile adorning their faces.

Spyro lightly stepped into the training room, unsure of what was going on. Ignitus had merely found him star-gazing on one of the walls and had asked him to go to the training room. The first thing Spyro noticed upon entering was that the statue had been lowered, making the area seem much larger. The second thing he noticed was that Mole-Yair and Exhumor were standing in front of a hastily erected table with a brown sail-cloth over the top of...something which had left the cloth's surface irregular. But they were not alone.

Spyro noticed the guardians along the wall. Ignitus was slipping in next to Terrador and using the earth dragon as a buffer to Cyril and Volteer, though both were currently silent. Standing with the two moles in the center was Kane and, out of the corner of his eye, Spyro noticed Sparx talking with—Spyro's brain stopped.

"Mom!? Dad?! What are you two doing here?" he eventually yelled out, alerting the others to his presence.

"Spyro!" Nina happily yelled in return. "How's my little boy been? I've missed you!"

"Mom!" Spyro said between laughs. "It's great to see you too! But why are you here? Did something happen?"

"I guess you could say that," Flash replied for his wife with a grin. "A couple of months ago, Mole-Yair's people came to our home asking about you and mentioned they were working on a special project. So we helped them."

Spyro turned to the Manweersmall with a questioning glance.

"You came to both us and the Atlawa with a dragonfly as a companion. We were curious to know why," Mole-Yair replied with a shrug.

"Wait, special project?" Spyro muttered, thinking over Flash's words. "Does that mean...?"

Before he could even finish the question, Kane pulled off the brown sail-cloth to reveal what lay beneath. They had finished the armor, alright.

As Spyro took in each individual piece laid out on the table, only one word came to mind. It was simply breathtaking. Each piece had one of the three parent armors' metal—bronze, silver, or gold—as its base, and a second used for details, trim and...artwork. Along each surface, a multitude of reliefs spread out as if to make the entire armor a mural to its wearer, memorializing his deeds. But the artwork didn't seem to compromise the integrity in the slightest. The armour lay on another sail-cloth, this one a deep purple, an almost perfect match to the color of his scales.

As Spyro looked it over, one of Volteer's lessons came to mind and he began to rattle off the pieces by name. The gold and silver helmet gleamed as he studied it. A slight unexpected reflection informed him that, locked between the two layers, a thin transparent material—likely diamond, a small part of his brain theorized—covered the eyes. Spyro's eyes danced as he took in the bronze and silver crinet, gold and bronze peytral, gold and silver pauldrons, silver and bronze tassets, bronze and gold gardraculi, silver and gold culet, and bronze and silver plackart. But what really stole the show was when Spyro looked at the greaves—bronze and gold—and gauntlets—silver and gold—and realized that the claw-tips gleamed purple.

"Fury gems?" he whispered in amazement. "But how?"

"Ah, well, one of the rocks that fell from Boyzitbig's eruption just so happened to be a geode of these crystals. We did not know if they would be of use to you, but because of their color, it seemed right to place them where we did," Exhumor explained happily.

"This is too much! Just making this must have set you back years! I can't accept this for free!"

"Spyro, my friend," Mole-Yair began, "you have aided my people time and again. Were it not for your efforts, we would either be dead or still be under the apes' power. If anything, this armor does not pay back in full all you have done for us. And perhaps you might do this selfish mole one more favor? Might we have the honor of being the first to arm you?"

Spyro paused, shocked, and could only nod mutely, staying still as Mole-Yair, Exhumor, Kain, Flash, Nina, Sparx and the Guardians each one-by-one took a piece off the table and secured it around Spyro's body. Once the last had been fastened, Spyro truly saw the purple cloth that had been laid underneath for the first time. In addition to its base color, in the center was a giant golden dragonfly —again, nearly a perfect replica of Sparx.

"This cloth was made by my people," Kane explained, pulling the cloth off of the table and peeling a second from underneath. "It is apparently traditional among dragons to take a personal emblem to better identify others on the battlefield. The cloth might be able to slow down a crossbow bolt, but I wouldn't rely on it. I think the best defence for your wings would be to simply not get hit there."

Kane then fastened the cloth and Spyro beat his wings three times to test both the security of the knot and to see how much restriction it caused. The cloth remained secured to his wings and Spyro found that he still had his normal range when it came to positioning his wings.

Under the second cloth, Spyro saw four sets of weapons—bow and quiver, lance, sword in a sheathe, and a mace, which was also secured—and a shield. The pommels of the sword and mace were again made of fury gems. The grips of the sword and mace seemed to be made out of the same material that the bow and base of the lance was. Down the entire length of the lance, tiny reinforcing bands ran to prevent breakage. Spyro could even see the faint outline of runes carved into the wood, the magic doubtlessly reinforcing it even more.

Spyro tentatively grasped the lance and, even through his gauntlet, he felt the wood thrum. "This is..."

"The heartwood of the tree where you grew up," Nina finished. "So that no matter what happens, we'll always be with you."

Spyro picked though the other items on the table, unsure of what to say as the weight of the gift began to sink in. When he pulled an arrow from the quiver, it did not give the same reaction.

"That is from the branch of a tree near Warfang, the dragon capital. It is popular among archers and we thought you would not mind as much if it were lost or rendered unusable," Volteer supplied.

Spyro nodded absently. All of this, the armor, the cloth, and the weapons... They were all meant to be cherished, but they were also meant to be used. It would be a disservice to have them merely gather dust after the loop ended. It was then that Spyro noticed something. His power was moving. It wasn't being used, per se, but it wasn't stagnant either. More power rose up from his body naturally and Spyro silently marveled as the previously unknown reserves began to fill. Unseen to his eye, his armor began to faintly glow.

"Ah, we were able to infuse the armor with the three enchantments from its parents, though it does have less power than the originals. We were surprised at how strong the damage nullification enchantment was; it actually survived the process intact. Right now, the armor is taking the life force that you are expelling and pooling and storing it within itself for when you need to use it later. This is separate from the power behind the enchantments, so you need not worry about the armor losing its power at a critical time should you ever find yourself in a bad situation."

Spyro heard the words being spoken but they seemed, so...detached. So unreal.

"I don't know what to say," he heard himself mutter. "I guess I should begin with *'thank you, everyone!' "*

Classic 20.2:

Ember walked along the path of Dragon Village with a small smile on her face, taking in the sights. It had been a while since she had decided to see if she could make her village a perfect one, but in all the excitement of finding out there was another world with a Spyro in it, and making friends with the Spyro of her own world, she had nearly forgotten. Nonetheless, she was determined to spot the patterns in her village and fix them if she could.

Feeling content, she rounded a corner down the pathway. So far, no one seemed too distraught about anything. A smile creased Ember's face. On one hand, she was happy that, so far, not much of the village needed mending. On the other, it also meant what little she had to do in the loops was diminishing. Showing no sign of discontent, she continued on her merry way.

Once she was away from the general area of where most of the villagers were, she sighed. As happy as she was that things were peaceful...

Ember shook her head. Maybe there was something else she could do to pass time? She shrugged. Pranking didn't come as naturally to her as it did Spyro, unless her brother was somehow involved in it, and she didn't particularly care for it either. Glancing upward, she saw the fields of the Dragon Realms off in the distance. Maybe a short walk would help clear her head.

Running across the plains, Ember jumped and let the winds carry her for a short glide. She closed her eyes, taking in a deep breath of fresh air. She had long forgotten how satisfying it was just to go for a run, to feel the breeze under her wings without putting any effort into gliding. Opening her eyes, she saw blue skies as far as the eye could see. Ember grinned.

And then she tumbled over something, which sent her rolling along the ground with yelp. Slowly picking herself up, Ember shook her head. So much for that...

Glancing behind her, she stared blankly at the thing she had tripped over before staggering back, wide-eyed.

A dragon—or some kind of dragon-gremlin hybrid—was picking itself up and shaking its head. It had Spyro's purple coloration, but other than that, only those with extremely poor eyesight could mistake it for the genuine purple dragon himself.

"Hey! Watch where you're going!" the dragon said, raising its scaly paw in the air.

Ember could only blink. "Uh...sorry?"

The dragon blinked, staring at Ember. With a slight smile, a blush appeared on his face. "Oh, no, no! I'm sorry! I should have watched where I was going!"

Ember blinked, her expression going blank as she raised an eyebrow. The dragon moved a bit closer, a goofy smile on his face. Ember cringed, raising a paw in front of her.

"U-uh, I should be getting back to my village now," she said, glancing back towards her village.

"Alright! I'll walk you there! It's dangerous for a cute dragoness such as yourself to be walking around alone!" the dragon said, quickly walking up and taking Ember's paw.

"Th-that's okay! I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself!"

"Aw, come on now! I insist!"

"Sorry, but it'd be much quicker for me on my own and I think I hear my mom calling that I have to water the dog *kaythanksbye* !"

With that, Ember darted off as fast her paws could carry her, her eyes wide. The dragon blinked before raising a paw.

"Hey! Wait up! Maybe I can help!"

Spyro walked along the path of Dragon Village with an indifferent expression. Sparx rested on his head, an amused smile on his face.

"I'm telling you, Sparx, I can't place a claw on it, but something about this loop just feels...off," Spyro said, glancing around with narrowed eyes.

That was when a high-pitched squeal pierced the air and a pink blur darted past him faster than Spyro could blink.

"Hey, babe! Wait up! I don't bite, I promise!"

Spyro blinked as he watched a purple gremlin-dragon-creature charge past, a vibrant blush on his face and hearts in his eyes. Spyro looked on blankly before glancing up at Sparx, his expression flat.

"Well, Sparx... Look's like it's going to be one of *those* loops." Spyro sighed and face-pawed. *'I get the feeling that, somewhere, there's a drunk dragon passed out at his terminal.'*

Legend 20.3:

The room was cloaked in soft darkness as the night sky peered through the window. A gentle cool breeze flowed in, chilling the air inside the room. On top of a pile of hay, a purple dragon was curled up, attempting to sleep...the key word being 'attempting.'

Spyro shivered at the cold breeze, a scowl on his face as he curled up tighter. He groaned, rolling over to his side and letting his body

hang limp before rolling onto his stomach. Letting out an annoyed sigh, he rolled onto his back and cracked his bleary eyes open.

"C'mon, Spyro. You've slept like this for countless loops; you can get used to it once again..." Spyro muttered, blankly staring at the ceiling of his usual room in the temple. "Remember, dragons of your world don't sleep on beds...no matter how much more comfortable they are than sleeping on the ground."

Spyro groaned, head pounding as he went limp. Ever since the loop he'd spent with Classic, he'd found it hard to get a good night's sleep the way he used to. He shook his head, eyes closing as he tried to let fatigue take him, but his pounding head and aching back refused to let that happen. Spyro took a deep breath, shivering as a rush of cold air blew through his window, and groaned, rolling onto his stomach.

"Come on, now... You don't need a bed to fall asleep. Spy might, but repeat after me: as a dragon of your world, you do not—need—a—bed... A soft bed. A soft, warm and cozy—"

Spyro let out another groan as the cold breeze blew across his scales. Staggering to his feet, he scowled. Dragon of his world or no, surely they would have no objections to him getting a blanket to help deal with the cold, at the very least. Nearly stumbling, he wobbled drowsily out into the hall, his quest for a decent night's sleep having begun...

Spyro brushed up against the walls of the temple hall, letting out an exhausted sigh as he dragged himself along. Twelve different rooms checked so far, and not a single freaking blanket or even anything resembling one. Spyro groaned, head hung low as he nearly collapsed. He took a deep breath and looked up at what was usually Cynder's room.

'Maybe she could have...'

Spyro shook his head, only to grab it shortly after as it did nothing to help his headache. *'No, no. What am I thinking? What would Cynder think if she found out I couldn't sleep like a dragon anymore?'*

Spyro slid down the wall and onto the floor. His paws were aching, his head was pounding, and despite feeling like he could pass out at any second, he never did. Spyro groaned, getting back to his paws as he looked at the door to Cynder's room. He was tired. *Dead* tired. With a determined glint in his exhausted eyes, he began to drag himself forward.

He didn't care what others would think. Right now, all he wanted was sleep. Really, *really* badly.

With every last ounce of strength, Spyro placed his paw on the door, causing it to open. When he got a good look into it, though, he stopped.

"Cynder...?"

The dragoness in question slowly blinked awake at the sound of her name, peering over her blanket and pushing herself up from the soft cushioning of what she was sleeping on. Her emerald eyes were wide as she and Spyro stared blankly at each other for several seconds before he finally broke the silence.

"...Did you carry that in your subspace from the loops with Spy's world?"

A blush shone through Cynder's black scales as she turned around, covering herself in the blanket and curling into a ball.

"Don't laugh. The loops with these things in them spoiled me, okay?" she said, pulling the blanket over her head as she curled up tighter.

Spyro blinked, looking on blankly as the bed's frame seemed to sparkle in the moonlight. With whatever energy he had left, he pulled himself over to Cynder and placed his paws on the bed. "Cynder?"

The blanket-ball stirred before Cynder poked her head out curiously.

"...I'm spoiled now too," Spyro said flatly, resting his head on the soft cushions of the bed as he closed his eyes.

Cynder blinked. "Did you take a bed from those loops too?"

"No," Spyro muttered, body going limp.

"...Would you like to rest here until the next loop you can get one?"

"Yes. *Please.* "

Cynder giggled, moving over slightly so Spyro could get in. With a tired smile, Spyro crawled in, resting his head on the pillow while Cynder shared her blanket with him. She smiled. "Comfy?"

Several seconds passed without a response. Spyro's eyes remained closed.

"...Spyro?"

The only answer Cynder got in response was a soft snore. She chuckled, closing her eyes with a smile as she snuggled up against him. If dragons of their world wanted to torture themselves to sleep, that was fine, but as looping dragons, they were allowed to make a few exceptions.

(Following added on by Masterweaver:)

Sparx sighed.

Normally, he would have kept the photo in his big book o' blackmail, teasing Cynder and Spyro about it for loop after loop. But as much as he loathed to admit it...he did have a heart. It was a small, shriveled, snarky thing that he usually ignored, but it was there.

"...Damn it all."

With a groan, he tossed the photo into a torch and grumbled back to his own bed.

Classic 20.4:

"So yes, dragons and an army of drug or please spell Maria? I think it's early EST," Spyro said before pausing and face-palming.

"Spyro? Are you okay?" Ember asked, tilting her head as she raised an eyebrow.

"No, it is not true, with a total of enregistrement. If you ask me, is in every way the source code."

Spyro let out a frustrated groan as he threw his paws over his eyes and tipped his head back. Ember merely blinked.

"...Can you not speak normally this loop?"

"Existed before or." Spyro sighed, lowering his head in defeat. Ember walked over to him, patting him softly on the back.

"Found some!" Sparx said, flying over to the two dragons with pencil and paper in hand.

With a deep breath, Spyro took the two objects from Sparx and began writing on the paper. After a brief few seconds, he handed it over to Ember, who looked down at it.

"Ember, can we ask the next admin we see that isn't Ihy if there are support groups for alcoholic deities?"

Ember raised an eyebrow before turning to Spyro. "Why?"

Spyro took the paper back, wrote on it some more, and handed it back to Ember.

"Because if he doesn't stop falling off the wagon while at his terminal, I am going to spend the next few loops looking up how to kill deities without breaking the universe.'

Legend 20.5:

Spyro lay on the muddy ground of the swamp, staring up at the blue sky. Cynder was currently pre-occupied with being 'interrogated' by his parents, as they had decided to be upfront with the fact that they were in a relationship this loop to see how his parents would react to it. As per usual, there was no Terror of the Skies to worry about, but that didn't mean they weren't going to give her a hard time.

Spyro sighed. Maybe this hadn't been the best of ideas...

"Hey, Spyro! You up?" Sparx asked, hovering over Spyro's head.

"Yeah, I'm up," Spyro said, getting to his paws. "How's it going with Cynder?"

"Eh, usual overprotective mother, 'good job' father, and they want to make *certain facts* you've heard countless times by now known to both of you so they won't become grandparents yet," Sparx said, a smirk on his face.

Spyro groaned, face-pawing as he sat down. "Of everything that's a pain about my loop, I wouldn't have thought *that* would be one of the major ones."

"It wouldn't be as much of a pain if you were willing to blow off some steam once in a while," Sparx said, crossing his arms. "I'm telling you, Spyro, join the prank side. We have cookies!"

Spyro's expression flattened as he looked at Sparx. Sparx merely stuck his tongue out in response. Spyro took a deep breath. With a groan, Sparx rolled his eyes. "C'mon, Spyro! If freaking *Ignitus* is willing to mess around, at least give my way a chance!"

Spyro closed his eyes, memories of Ignitus' prank to get Volteer and Cyril to finally stop arguing returning in a rush. Never once in his life, either baseline or looping, had he ever expected to see such a thing. Spyro shook his head. He had to admit, had it had been anyone other than Ignitus, he would have just brushed off Sparx's words. However...

"...I don't know."

"Come on, Spyro! Just *once!* If you don't like it, I promise I won't bug you about it ever again!"

Spyro paused, looking at Sparx blankly for several seconds as the dragonfly stared back at him. Spyro closed his eyes, letting out a deep sigh. "...Fine. Only just this once, though!"

Sparx gave a wide grin, flying over to Spyro and hugging his forehead as best as he could. "I knew you'd come over to my side eventually! I never once stopped believing!"

Spyro groaned, shaking his head once Sparx let go. "Just... Nothing involving the guardians or Cynder, please. They're still strictly off-limits."

"No problem, bro. I have the perfect idea for our first prank together..."

Spyro and Cynder walked along the narrow path towards a certain opening. Cynder raised an eyebrow, turning to Spyro. "Are you sure about this? I'm not exactly all that big on this idea..."

Spyro shook his head. "It's just to get it out of his system for now. I'm hopeful that doing this will get him to stop bugging us to join in."

Sparx smirked, turning back to the two dragons. "Okay, just remember what I taught you! This is going to be great!"

Spyro sighed. *'I can't believe I'm about to go through with this...'*

Sparx darted out into the clearing. On cue, an ape charged forward and attempted to grab him. Sparx quickly flew up and out of the way, causing the ape to go sliding along the muddy ground. Sparx made ticking noises as he looked at the other snarling apes, raising his index finger in the air.

"Don't you hate when this happens to you? Simply wanting to capture a small creature, but all the usual methods proving ineffective?"

One of the apes shrieked, charging forward in an attempt to grab him. Sparx flew to the side and the ape slid along the ground.

"Just like that. Well, then! Look no further!" With that, Sparx pulled out a tiny hat and a red-and-white striped shirt out of his subspace, quickly putting them on as he pulled out a tiny cane. "For you too can capture even the toughest creature with the Cage Net Nine Thousand!"

On cue, Sparx pulled out from his subspace a silver PokéBall, which was roughly a bit smaller than himself. As he tossed it up and down, Cynder glanced at Spyro.

"Where'd he get that?" she asked, keeping her voice down.

Spyro's expression flattened. "Honestly, I stopped questioning how Sparx got most of his prank-related stuff so very long ago..."

"With the Cage Net Nine Thousand, even the toughest of creatures to capture will be a breeze!" Sparx said, spinning the silver ball on his finger. Noticing a Frogweed not far off, he smirked.

"Behold!"

Sparx tossed the device through the air towards the Frogweed. The ball bounced off it and cracked open, and the Frogweed glowed

before it was sucked into it. The device rolled for a few seconds before it bounced back into Sparx's hands. The apes blinked, eyes wide as they looked on in awe. Cynder's expression went blank.

"...I can't believe they're actually falling for this," Cynder deadpanned.

"Me either," Spyro said, expression equally blank.

"The Cage Net Nine Thousand is truly a miracle in the creature catching field!" Sparx said, tossing the ball into the air. "It is a must have for all minions of future evil overlords everywhere! But, as you can imagine, such an amazing device isn't exactly costless..."

Sparx glanced over to Spyro and Cynder hiding in the bushes. Their expressions went flat and they glanced at each other, sighing heavily.

"How much is it?"

The apes blinked as a pair of the dullest fake enthusiastic voices echoed through the clearing. Sparx scowled, but quickly shook it off.

"I'm glad you asked, extremely tired swamp!" Sparx said, catching the ball as it fell back towards the ground. "The Cage Net Nine Thousand won't cost you five thousand gems, nor will it cost you even a thousand! Order now and you can get it for the low, low price of two hundred gems, with six additional payments of one hundred gems!"

"Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay."

Sparx's eye twitched at the dull cry of false joy. Despite this, the apes still seemed captivated. One of them had already begun to pull out a sack of gems. Both Spyro and Cynder's jaws dropped as the apes crowded around Sparx, gems at the ready.

"...I can *not* believe that actually worked," Spyro said flatly, eyes wide.

Sparx smirked, shoving the mounds of gems into his subspace. "No thanks to you two, mind you," he said, glancing over to them with a scowl. "You two weren't even *trying* ! Did you two *really* have such little faith in me back there?"

Spyro opened his mouth.

"Don't answer that."

Spyro closed his mouth. Cynder shook her head.

"Am I the *only* one worried over the fact that Malefor now has a near perfect way to catch creatures?" Cynder asked, her eyes narrowing.

"Don't worry, Cyndy, there's only one real 'Cage Net Nine Thousand.' The rest I handed out were duds," Sparx said, tossing the last gems into his subspace. "That said, we should probably join up with Iggy now and set up the swamp for an assault, as I don't think they're going to be happy when they find that out."

Spyro shook his head, placing a paw on his forehead.

Sparx crossed his arms. "C'mon, Spyro! Admit it! You at least thought it was kind of funny when you saw the entranced look on their faces, right?"

Spyro paused, staring blankly at the ground. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. "...I'll admit, I was a bit surprised at how easily they were fooled."

"See! I told you!" Sparx said, a smirk on his face. "C'mon, Spyro! Give it another shot! I have another idea that I could really use your help for!"

Spyro closed his eyes, taking a short breath. Reopening them, he glanced over to Cynder, but she just shrugged. Spyro blinked before

turning back to Sparx. "...Fine. But only if it doesn't involve the guardians in any way!"

"No problem-o, bro! I have the perfect idea..."

Classic 20.6: (Sick Loop, pt. 1)

Spyro smirked, a pair of goggles on his head and a blue scarf around his neck. Glancing down at his snowboard, he pulled the goggles over his eyes. Sparx could only blink, looking down at the massive slope of Crystal Glacier with a frown. Wide-eyed, he glanced over to Spyro.

"Are you sure about this?" Sparx asked, glancing back down the steep slope. "That's quite the drop-off."

"C'mon, Sparx!" Spyro said, shakily getting onto two legs as he hopped onto the snowboard. "How different can snowboarding be from skateboarding? I'm already great at the latter, so this should come naturally too!"

"True. That said, though, most people usually start out small. Y'know, with a little hill," Sparx said, his expression flat. "You also skateboard on four feet, which you can't do with a snowboard. You also only learned how to walk on two paws only a few loops ago."

Spyro rolled his eyes, giving Sparx a flat look. "Seriously, Sparx, I got this. I know how to balance on two paws now. Quite your worry- *ing!* "

Spyro's forepaws flailed about in the air and he tipped backwards as his eyes went wide. Flinging his upper body forward, Spyro froze, arms out at his sides as he glanced around. Sparx narrowed his eyes.

"Eh heh," Sparx said. Shaking his head, he looked Spyro in the eyes. "Listen, Spyro, all I'm saying is I can only protect you from a

few hits. You've gotten better at taking hits, but you still suck when it comes to taking massive ones. If you wipe out..."

"I'm not going to wipe out!" Spyro said, narrowing his eyes. "I swear, sometimes it's like you have no faith in me."

"Well, that's because I know you too well."

Spyro groaned, eyes narrowing with a frown. Glancing back down at the slope, he grinned. "Well, whatever. Guess I'm just going to have to prove you wrong, then!"

Leaning down, Spyro strapped his paws onto the board and leant forward. The board slowly began to glide across the snow as Spyro approached the edge of the peak. With one final push, he went sliding down at high speeds. Though he had a grin on his face at first, it was quickly replaced with a scowl as he started wobbling back and forth, his arms flailing uselessly. His eyes widened as he slid back and forth in his flailing.

Managing to regain his balance as the board began to straighten out, Spyro sighed as he brushed some sweat off his forehead. Sparx was quick to catch up to him, giving him a flat glance. Spyro frowned.

"Sparx, relax! I'm doing fine!" Spyro said before looking down at the slope. Seeing a nearby ramp, he smirked. "Watch this!"

Spyro leant forward, gaining speed as he propelled off the ramp. Grabbing onto the board, he did two barrel rolls before he landed board-first back on the slope with a smack. The board waggled back and forth as Spyro struggled to keep his balance. Hunkering down with his arms out, he glanced around. Raising back up, he grinned as Sparx caught up to him.

"See, Sparx? What did I tell ya?" Spyro said, standing up straight as he closed his eyes, rubbing one of his knuckles on his chest. "Just like skateboarding!"

Sparx gave him a flat glance and looked back down at the slope ahead. Eyes going wide and jaw dropping, he turned back to Spyro. "Spyro! Look out!"

Spyro had no time to react as he tumbled into the snow bank, slamming face-first into the soft powder as his board cracked in half, having slammed mid-gloat into a rock that was protruding from the ground. Spyro went tumbling down the slope, Sparx wincing as he turned a deep blue color.

As one of the straps on the snowboard tore off, the piece that was strapped to one of Spyro's back paws did so in turn. Spyro slammed back-first into a pine tree that was sticking out of the slope, the blow sending him spinning as he desperately tried to dig his claws into the snow. Sparx groaned, wincing as his coloration turned a dull green.

Failing to get a foothold, Spyro tried to shake the last bit of snowboard off his paw. Managing to free his paw from what remained of the board, he had no time to react as he slammed into a snow bank, the blow sending him rolling as he began to pick up snow around him. As the snowball began to get bigger and bigger, it shot off one of the ramps and went flying into the air.

Seeing the snowball about to slam into the ground below, Sparx paused, seemingly staring off into space as he waved goodbye to no one in particular. The ball smashing into the ground, sending snow everywhere, and Sparx disappeared in a puff of smoke.

At the bottom of the slope, covered in snow, Spyro groaned and tried to stand up. He barely managed to lift his head, teeth bared and eyes clenched shut, before he finally fell back into the snow.

"Ngh..."

Spyro's eyes opened to cracked lenses and the night sky, his head pounding and his body shivering uncontrollably. He groaned, trying to get up. Realizing something was holding his body down,

something very cold at that, Spyro glanced down at the blanket of snow that covered him. Closing his eyes with a scowl, Spyro took a deep breath and shot forth a short burst of flame.

Managing to melt a small portion of the snow, he was able to force a paw out from under it. Digging himself out and getting to his paws, he staggered around, trying to regain balance. Placing a paw on his head, he glanced around. Sensing a small amount of magical energy, he noticed what appeared to be snowballs with eyes hopping around.

'Fodder magic. Thank Ihy.'

With that thought in mind, Spyro slowly made his way over to them. Managing to sneak up on one, he let loose a stream of flames. The snowball melted and turning into a magic butterfly that quickly reformed with a burst of light into a green dragonfly. Sparx groaned, stretching his arms into the air. Glancing over, he blinked.

"Yeesh, Spyro. You don't look so good."

"No, really? What makes you say that?" Spyro grumbled, slumping off with a scowl.

Sparx blinked, following after him post haste. "Spyro? You gonna be okay?"

Spyro groaned, giving Sparx a flat glance. Sparx scratched the back of his head. "Eh, yeah. Dumb question."

Spyro shook his head, continuing to drag himself off into the night. "Sparx... All I want is to get back to the Artisan Realm and sleep this day o-o- *oooooff*— " Before Spyro could finish his sentence, he sneezed. Groaning, he brushed his nose.

Sparx raised an eyebrow. "Spyro...?"

"I'm f-f-fine, Sparx," Spyro said, glancing over to him. "I must have gotten snow up m-my nose or...or...!" Spyro sneezed, body jerking at the sudden movement. He groaned, grabbing his pounding head.

"Oh no... Spyro, you don't think you're getting sick, do you?" Sparx asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I'm not getting sick, Sparx," Spyro said, narrowing his eyes with a frown. "I already told you I-I—" Spyro gave a few coughs before clearing his throat. "I've just got snow in places snow should never be. Once it's out, I'll be fine. Quit worrying."

Sparx narrowed his eyes as Spyro skulked off. Shaking his head, he quickly darted after his best friend.

Legend 20.7: (Feat: GoldenGriffiness)

"Well, this is not going to be a fun loop," Spyro muttered, eyeing his small glowing body with a frown.

"Au contraire." The golden dragon grinned. "This is going to be fun like you've never seen it."

"The realms are screwed this loop," Cynder summarized flatly as she landed from her latest early escape.

Classic 20.8: (Looking towards the future pt. 1)

Ember walked the streets of Dragon Village with a content smile. Looking around at the multiple dragons going about their usual business, so far none of them diverging from the baseline, she got a determined glint in her eyes as she glanced forward. For too long now, she had been putting off her original resolution to try and make the village perfect. Either a random variant would pop up or Spyro would need her for something for a change.

She took a deep breath. It was time to stop putting this off and actually do something productive for a change.

Looking to the side, she noticed two dragons arguing amongst themselves. One appeared to be a green Magic Crafter, while the other was a rather slender greenish-blue Peace Keeper.

"You truly are a brute, Andor! I hope you realize that!"

"I'm just saying, Ajax, magic doesn't always solve everything! Sometimes you need to apply forceful persuasiveness!"

Ember tilted her head. It was odd to see a Magic Crafter or Peace Keeper in Dragon Village, let alone both. Normally only Artisans populated this town. Shaking the thought off, Ember was quick to make her way forward.

"Um, excuse me?"

Both of the bickering dragons looked down as Ember looked up with her big blue eyes. "What's going on here?"

The dragons glanced at each another, raising their eyebrows as Ajax shrugged. Glancing back down, they both gave warm smiles.

"Oh, nothing. Nothing at all," Ajax said, waving his forepaw dismissively. "Just out for a walk, is all."

Ember narrowed her eyes, tilting her head. "But it sounded like you two were arguing..."

"Oh, that?" Andor said, giving a slight chuckle as he waved his paws in front of his face. "That was just...uh... We were just debating some things about magic. Super advanced stuff like that. Nothing a little dragoness such as yourself needs to worry about."

"But—"

"Yes, yes. Quite!" Ajax said, bending down and motioning Ember to leave. "Now then, run along. Nothing to worry about here."

"But—"

"Yes, yes. Everything is fine here. Just move along and go pick some flowers or something."

Ember was given a gentle push as Andor leant down and motioned her along. She glanced back with frown, noting the phony smiles the two dragons were giving her. With a sigh, she began to move along, already hearing the two dragons beginning their argument anew. Her head fell as she dragged herself along.

'This might be a lot harder than I originally thought...'

She shook her head. With how many loops she had been through, she had completely forgotten about the tiny fact that she still looked like a young dragoness. A young pink dragoness at that. Closing her eyes, she paused and took a deep breath. Getting non-loopers to take her seriously was going to prove to be a tough challenge...

'I wonder if Spyro has any spells for artificially aging dragons up?' Ember thought, moving along as she looked around. *'Should probably ask him this loop. If he doesn't, it might be something he'd be interested in.'*

Ember smiled, glancing over at one of the many portals around the village. It was time to do some portal hopping.

The sun hung midway across the sky as Ember made her way through the realms in search of Spyro, having already checked both the Dragon Realms and the Forgotten Realms. She took a deep breath as she walked through the fields of Autumn Plains, halfway through her search of Avalar. Stopping near the pool, she sighed.

'This is coming dangerously close to our early loop setup...' she thought, looking down at her reflection in the pool.

Shaking her head, she made her way towards the Skelos Badlands. Before she could jump in to continue her search, though, an explosion rang out. Whipping around to stare at the castle above, she noticed a cloud of smoke billowing out of it. Ember may have only been to Avalar a few times in the loops, but she was pretty sure explosions were never part of the baseline. Without a second thought, she darted towards the castle.

Quickly making her way through the courtyard, up the ladders and down the castle's hall, she soon came across the room that the smoke was billowing out of.

"Professor... We only need something to track down loopers. We don't need looper trackers that are also lazers, egg boilers, or lazer-powered egg boilers. Especially if they're going to turn into mini hand grenades."

"Hmmm... Maybe trying to make it a convenient snack machine as well was a bit too ambitious..."

Ember blinked as the smoke began to clear. The Professor and Spyro were standing in the middle of the room, both completely covered in soot. Spyro rolled his eyes.

"Spyro!"

Spyro jumped at Ember's cry, looking back with his eyes wide and a scowl on his face.

Ember cringed, lowering her head. "I'm awake! Don't worry! I didn't mean to scare you like that!"

"Uh, n-no. It's alright. Should have figured as much considering I normally don't meet you in the baseline yet..." Spyro said, glancing away as he scratched the back of his head.

The Professor's eyes slowly darted back and forth as the two dragons exchanged looks. The Professor shook his head, glancing back down at his clipboard. *'I swear, youth these days.'*

Taking a deep breath, Ember lifted her head and spoke up first. "So...what's going on here?"

Spyro took a few moments' pause as Ember moved closer before he finally shook off his previous shock. Looking up at Ember, he frowned.

"I think we have an outside looper in this loop. One who didn't get the memo about something very important in our loop," Spyro said flatly, sitting back down.

Ember frowned, eyes widening with slight worry. "Why? What happened?"

Spyro glanced down at the ground, his eyes narrowing as his breathing became heavier.

"Well, this loop I had plans to see if I could trick the Sorcerer into fighting the Sorceress," Spyro said, glancing upward. "So I teleported to his lair, ready to cast the banish spell if need be. However, once I made it to his main chamber..." Spyro paused, closing his eyes as he let out a heavy sigh. "Someone had...had already taken him out."

Ember tilted her head. "So? Isn't that a good thing? That just means you have more free time to do whatever now."

"It's not someone else taking him out that annoys me, Ember," Spyro said, glancing over to her with a stern expression. "It's how they did it. They didn't knock him out, nor did they beat him and send him off licking his wounds, or even turn him in to the Peace Keepers." Spyro looked forward with a scowl. "They straight up *murdered* him, Ember! His blood was all over the arena when I got there!"

Spyro let out a disgruntled snort, glaring at the floor. "I know he's a bad guy, but he doesn't deserve to die. No one does!"

Ember raised an eyebrow, eyeing Spyro carefully as she placed a claw to her chin. "Um...Spyro, if you don't mind me asking, didn't you...?"

"I know what you're thinking Ember, but this is different," Spyro said, glancing over to Ember. "The creatures I usually fight are magical, created by the current big bad, and can easily be recreated with their memories intact. The ones that aren't magical I usually just knock out." He glanced forward as he took a deep breath. "Actually killing a living being, though? That's just..."

Spyro let out a frustrated groan, placing a paw to his forehead. Ember frowned, gently patting his back. Spyro took a deep breath, expression softening as he glanced over to her.

"Thanks, Embs," he said, giving a slight smile. The smile quickly disappeared from his face as he glanced forward again, and it was shortly replaced by a frown. "In any case, we need to find out who this mysterious looper is and tell them that stuff like this isn't going to fly in our loop, no ifs, ands or buts."

"And since dream walking only works if they're asleep... I'm pretty much relying on the Professor here to come up with something to make finding loopers easier," Spyro said, giving the Professor a glare. "...That's *if* the Professor *just* makes a looper tracker and nothing else."

"I'm sorry I'm such an inventive mole, Spyro," the Professor deadpanned, glancing up from his clipboard. "I just figured if you're going to have a device that tracks loopers, it should also have basic inbuilt survival tools should you wind up in an unpleasant universe."

Spyro face-pawed. The Professor shook his head, going back to his notes as he walked over to his supercomputer. Ember glanced around, eyes full of worry. Exactly who could this mystery looper be?

What if they weren't all that friendly to begin with, and decided to come after them? Ember gulped. She may have learned a little about how to defend herself, but...

She shook her head, hoping that, at the very least, whoever this looper was, they would be willing to listen to reason...

Her breathing was heavy as she flew through the sky as fast as her wings could carry her. She had no idea what this place was and already it had not started well for her. Once again, she had become the pawn of a purple dragon determined to cause nothing but pain and strife, and on top of that, she was supposedly his daughter as well. Her eyes were wide as she glanced around, seeing green fields as far as the eye could see.

This wasn't her world; that she had already figured out. It was completely alien to her. She knew Spyro said this would happen, but...

Spyro. Above all else, she needed to find him. Only then, together, could they figure out how to handle this loop. Like they always had and like they always would. He had to be in this world somewhere and she wouldn't rest until she found him.

Cynder frowned. This loop was going to be a thing...

(A/N: Hey everyone, TokoWH here again. Sorry for taking a while to update. Things haven't been going particularly well for me as of late, due to a combination of money troubles and the seasons changing, but I'm still very much alive and attempting to keep the loops updated somewhat frequently. Updates during the winter months may be sparse, though, as winter usually takes away a lot of my motivation to do a lot of things.

Also, something I should make note of in the final Arms and Armor snip AbZ wrote, 'Gardraculi' is apparently a play on

'Gardequeue', which is, from what I understand, a term for horse armor. I know that confused Riv a bit, so AbZ wanted me to make note of that when I brought it up.

Anyways, a bit of a plug here, but...

If you're interested in RPs , the Spyro Loops Forum has recently opened their doors up to them. I hope you consider it, because we're striving to create a friendly RPing experience that's fun for everyone involved. We don't take kindly to those treating it like serious business and trying to kill others' fun because they refuse to adapt to what others have their characters do, and people caught doing that will be told to knock it off or face a ban. I know I've personally experienced far too many RPs that ended up going that route, so if you've been turned off by the experience like I was, I hope you'd consider giving it another short in our Forum.

Currently we have three RPs at the moment. One set in the Classic verse, one in the Legend verse, and one that combines the two. We are always open to new RP ideas, so don't shy away from suggesting one you thought of. Just make sure to check the RP rules before posting.

Again, if you've been turned off by RPs that ended up becoming serious biz in the past, I hope you reconsider, because we're going to do everything in our power to keep that from happening. Hope to see you there soon! :D

As always, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out!

Loops:

20.1: The uber armor is a go. Legend likely won't use it all that much, though, outside of desperate situations, as he'd likely not want to become reliant on it.

20.2: Well, Ember did want Spyro to like her. She never specified *which* Spyro, though.

20.3: Part of living is adapting to conveniences. Even if you normally wouldn't get it until years from now.

20.4: Spyro the Dragon: Vietnamese Crystal version.

20.5: Get yours today!

20.6: I'm sure he'll be fine. Just a bit of sleep and he'll wake up good as new.

20.7: The Legend of Sparx: The Eternal Snark.

20.8: On the bright side, still better than how she normally awakes.)

Do you care for me? (!)

(Fused 1.1 continued) (Feat: Toko, Ukelele, AbZ)

Legend looked over the makeshift dojo of the backyard with concern. It was of decent size, but trying to practice one's fire element while there was so much greenery around didn't exactly strike him as the best of ideas. He didn't really have much of a choice in the matter, though, as he was forbidden from leaving until either Elora or Nina came to pick them up, and he doubted Edna would allow them to leave after what had happened to Ember. Legend shook his head, hoping the many loops he'd spent reinforcing his skills with the ice element would be sufficient enough to put out any rogue flames.

"Okay then, Ember. Exactly how much do you know about the fire element?" Legend asked, standing next to Cynder as both dragons eyed the pink dragoness carefully.

"Um, well...we can breathe it," Ember said, giving a slight smile.

"And?" Legend asked, tilting his head with a raised eyebrow.

"And...and...uh..." Ember said, her smile waning slightly. "We...we can breathe it?"

Legend sighed. "Ember, there is a lot more to fire than just breathing it. Surely you must have seen dragons of your world using more advanced fire techniques?"

"Well...not really," Ember said, placing a paw to her chin. "All I've ever seen is elder dragons managing to maintain fire breaths longer than most younger ones. Personally, I only know how to breathe a short burst of flames..."

Legend blinked, glancing downward with narrowed eyes. It would seem what Classic's world possessed in odd devices and general advancements it lacked in spiritualism and connection to one's

element. Shaking his head, he turned to Ember. "Mind giving a demonstration of your technique?"

Nodding, Ember headed over to the training dummy, which sprang to life as she got closer. Ember took a deep breath, rearing her head back as an orange glow began to shine in the back of her throat. Jolting her head forward, she unleashed a short burst of flames. The dummy jumped and fell back. Ember took a few short breaths before looking back at Legend. He was watching on with an indifferent expression.

"Did...did I do something wrong?" Ember asked, walking back over to him.

"Kind of," Legend said, shaking his head. "Even if I had no knowledge of the fire element, I can tell you were breaking the foremost rule of using any element."

"I was?" Ember asked, frowning as she held her paw against her necklace. "W-what was I doing wrong?"

Legend took a deep breath, expression softening as he saw the distress growing on Ember's face. "Now, calm down. There's nothing wrong with making a mistake. You're here to learn, after all."

Legend stood up on all fours, heading towards the dummy. "First off, watch me."

Ember watched as Legend stopped in front of the dummy. He took a breath through his nose, stance strong as he lowered his body towards the ground. When he opened his maw, flames spewed forth and engulfed the dummy. The display lasted for several moments before Legend finally decided to break the demonstration. Turning back, he saw Ember looking on with wide eyes and smirked.

"Notice the difference?" he asked, heading back towards her.

"Uh...kind of," Ember said, tilting her head. "It looked like you weren't forcing your flames out. It was more like they readily came at your call."

"Exactly," Legend said, sitting down. "Though some form of control is needed to keep fire from getting out of hand, at their base, the elements aren't so much something that can be controlled as they are something we can work beside and call upon in our time of need, like an equal partner in the field of combat," he summed up, placing a claw to his chin. "The more you try to control them, the more unwilling they'll be to led you their aid. However, treat them as a being in their own right and they will do the same for you."

Ember blinked at Legend's explanation, eyes wide as a glint of awe shone within them. "Wow... I didn't know using an element was so deep. In my world, we just treat it as magic that can be controlled and leave it at that."

Legend chuckled, rolling his eyes. "That's a rather simplistic way of going about it. To be honest, hearing that, I'm not surprised your elders can only breathe flames a bit longer than usual." Shaking his head, Legend smirked. "Now then, before anything else, you must get used to sensing the flames within you, for only then can you truly begin to call upon its power."

Legend smiled at the intent look on Ember's face, an odd feeling of pride and joy in his heart at how eagerly she was listening to his words, ready to apply what she was being taught. Wondering if this was how Ignitus felt when he had trained him, Legend took a deep breath. Training another might have been something he wasn't used to, but he was slowly growing to like it.

"Close your eyes and take a deep breath."

Ember proceeded to do so.

"Focus. You should be able to feel the spiritual essence of fire within you already."

Ember relaxed, tuning out the world as she focused only on herself. Not a second later, she felt a soft yet warm feeling within her chest.

"Acknowledging that it's there, that it is its own being, is the first step to properly using any element. Now then, open your eyes."

Doing so, Ember took a deep breath as she looked around. Both Legend and Cynder gave her a smile. Ember smiled in return.

"Now then, head back over to the training dummy. It's time to learn how to call upon its power."

Giving a nod, Ember walked back over to the training dummy, planting her paws firmly on the ground. Legend gave Cynder a nod and, with a nod in response, she brought the dummy back to life. Ember steadied herself as the unmoving dummy stared her down. Legend stepped forward.

"An easy way to tap into an element without forcing its power is to get into its mindset," Legend said, standing about a foot or so behind Ember. "Though we are unsure if the elements are sentient or not, they do respond to certain emotions and mindsets. For fire, growth, passion and thoroughness seem to be the most common ways of evoking it."

Ember glanced back. "Alright...but how am I supposed to feel that? I'm not even sure what growth or thoroughness feels like..."

"Well," Legend said with a slight smile, "let me ask you this: when, if you leave it to fend for itself, does fire stop burning? Only when it cannot burn anything more. Fire keeps going, perhaps not at the same pace, but never stopping until it can burn nothing else. Sometimes people confuse this with determination, drive, or stubbornness, especially when you take passion into account. And fire can be pig-headed, stubborn, or twenty other ways of saying the same thing." Legend rolled his eyes at such terms. "But really, fire just tries everything it can think of to accomplish its goal. And if it can't find a way to accomplish it, it will give up, not because it didn't

try but because it tried everything and the answer wasn't among the choices given."

"So when you set yourself to do something, prepare for a long haul. And try, really try, everything you can think of. And if at the end of that you could not accomplish your goal, fire will be satisfied with your effort."

"Those are hard emotions to feel, for sure. They generally come in time and are hard to explain without experiencing first hand," Legend said, shaking his head. "For now, we'll start off with the easiest one to understand. Close your eyes, Ember, and try to imagine something you feel passionate about. Something that would cause you to call upon your flames."

Ember nodded, looking back at the training dummy with a scowl. She took a deep breath, closing her eyes as she began to tune out the world around her until it felt like she stood in the center of a dark void. Her breathing became soft and steady.

'Passion... Something that would make me call upon my flames... What would that be...?'

Ember stood motionless for a few seconds before she scowled. She opened her eyes, glaring sharply at the dummy as she dug her claws into the ground and growled. The face of the one who had caused her to seek self-defence training in the first place, the mugger who had robbed her of her sense of security, found its way onto the dummy's face. Ember hunkered down with fangs bared.

Finally, she let out a mighty roar and a small river of flames burst forth from her throat, engulfing the dummy. It lasted for several seconds before Ember finally cut the display, having to take a few seconds to catch her breath. She glanced back, seeing both Legend and Cynder smiling at her.

"Not bad. You still forced it a little, but I was able to tell that you were truly tapping into your element," Legend said, stepping forth and

patting Ember on the back. "A few more practices like that and, before you know it, tapping into your element will be almost second nature."

Despite still catching her breath, Ember managed to force a smile.

"We'll give basic fire breathing a few more attempts. Once you're comfortable with that, we'll move on to some of the more advanced stuff," Legend said with a smile.

Ember gave a nod before turning back to the dummy.

About an hour passed as Ember practiced breathing flames. With each attempt, her flames became less and less wild as her stance grew stronger. With one final breath, Ember let loose a solid stream of fire and the attack lasted for a good several seconds before broke it off. She smirked. Legend and Cynder gave warm smiles.

"You're doing great, Ember. You're learning this a lot quicker than most."

Ember grinned, looking back at them. Legend looked at Cynder, who gave a nod. Turning back to Ember, he smiled.

"I think you're ready to learn some more technical aspects of fire," Legend said, taking a few steps forward. Pausing, he motioned with his paw for Ember to come over to him.

Doing so, Ember sat next to him with smile on her face, fidgeting in anticipation. Legend chuckled before looking at the extremely singed dummy.

"Watch me," he said, stepping forward.

Legend steadied himself as he drew his head back, taking in a soft breath through his nose as an orange glow shone from the back of his maw. With a quick motion, he spat a ball of pure condensed fire

at the dummy, which exploded on impact. The small leftover embers drifted into the dirt, smoldering out not a second later. Legend glanced over to see Ember looking on with wide eyes and couldn't help but smirk.

"The fireball is usually the second most basic skill a fire dragon learns, right after learning how to tap into its power," Legend said, walking back over to Cynder. "It's a simple ability, but one that has proven itself useful for many fire dragons over the years." Legend sat down next to his mate, looking over towards Ember with a smile. "Now then, give it a shot. Eh, pun not intended."

Ember giggled, shaking her head as she turned back to face the dummy, standing a few feet away.

"Now then, call upon your flames as if you were about to breathe fire, but instead of releasing it in a stream, let it build up into a ball at the back of your throat."

Ember nodded, calling upon her flames. She groaned slightly, her throat beginning to tickle as she felt a warm feeling building up at the back of it, her mouth beginning to glow a faint orange.

"Now, when you feel it reaching its peak, let the flame out in one swift move!"

Ember let out a muffled grunt as she felt the fire building up more and more in the back of her throat. Beginning to sweat, she finally couldn't hold it anymore and thrust her head forward. A ball of flames shot out and went flying, sailing over the dummy by inches. It continued forth into the air before it smacked into the branches of a tree. The tree burst into flames. All three dragons' mouths dropped as their eyes went wide.

Ember screamed and started to dart around in a blind panic. "Oh no! Oh no! What do I do, what do I do!?"

"N-now, calm down! I got this!" Legend said, quickly jumping into the air and flying over to the tree.

He opened his maw, frost coming forth as he began to circle the tree. He unleashed a wave of frost, circling faster and faster as he tried to get every single flame. After a few seconds of this, the entire upper part of the tree was encased in ice. Breathing a sigh of relief, Legend flew back down towards the two dragonesses. Ember hung her head, a frown on her face.

"I'm sorry," she said, closing her eyes. "I didn't mean to do that, I swear!"

Legend shook his head, placing a paw on Ember's shoulder. "Hey, it's alright. Like I said, you're still learning."

Ember glanced up, a soft smile on her face.

"Oh my lord!"

All three dragons flinched, turning to find Edna looking at the icicle-tree with wide eyes. "What in the realms happened here!?"

The three of them glanced at each other before Legend finally stood forth with a sheepish grin. "Uh... We were trying to teach Ember how to use her fire element?"

Things were quiet in the house. The three young dragons sat at the table in the kitchen, giving each other awkward looks as they heard Edna talking to someone over the phone.

"She set a tree on fire, Zantor! She needs to cut this out now before we don't have a house left!" Edna said, pacing back and forth through the living room.

"If I may interject," a voice said over the phone. "May I point out that she was only training there because you refuse to let her train at the

dojo, where they have measures to prevent this."

"Don't try placing this on me, Zant!" Edna said, eyes narrowing as she sat down.

"I'm not trying to," Zantor replied. "All I'm saying is, you're doing the same thing you did when Cynder wanted to start learning self-defence. On top of that, Ember is trying to connect to her element, a right which all dragons have."

"I know that, but, it's just..." Edna said, placing a paw to her forehead. "I feel she's just overreacting. Ember isn't like Cynder. She's not as tough. She'd be flung through the air by the first dragon she tried to spar with!"

"Again, that's the exact same thing you said would happen to Cynder when she wanted to join the dojo," Zantor said before giving a sigh.

"This is different, though! You know how delicate Ember is!" Edna said, throwing one of her paws up into the air.

"Edna... You need to stop babying her. That's part of the reason she's like that," Zantor said, taking a deep breath. "You know I love our daughters as much as you do, but they're going to start growing up whether we like it or not. Remember when you told Cynder you weren't going to let her join the dojo?"

Edna groaned, placing a paw over her eyes. "Don't remind me. She tried self-teaching herself in the basement and ended up knocking the water heater loose. We had to take nothing but cold showers for weeks."

"Exactly. The more you oppose this, the more likely Ember will try to rebel like Cynder did," Zantor said. "Only this time, unlike Cynder, Ember has access to fire."

Edna took a deep breath.

"You realize we have two choices, right? We let her join the dojo where they have measures to keep dragon elements from wreaking havoc, or we can risk having her rebel when we tell her 'no' and thus risk having our house catch on fire."

Edna sighed, getting out of the chair as she rubbed her head. "I still feel like it's an overreaction, but..."

"Edna..."

Edna shook her head. "...Alright, I'll tell her."

"Okay. You going to be alright, sweetie?"

"I suppose..." Edna muttered, giving a long sigh. "You going to be home soon?"

"Hopefully. We're almost at a breakthrough here with the magic transit system. If all goes according to plan, we'll be able to vastly increase the range of the current portals, which means less portal-hopping in order to get to further away destinations."

"Alright. Just remember, you have a family waiting for you back here."

Zantor chuckled. "Don't worry, dear. I make sure to remind myself of that fact every day. See you soon. Bye."

"Bye."

Edna sighed, ending the call as she placed the phone back on the hook. A frown on her face, she glanced over to a photo on a nearby table. Walking over, she picked it up to get a better look at it. The frame held a picture of herself out in the backyard, a much younger Cynder and Ember riding on her shoulders, all of them with smiles on their faces. Several seconds passed as Edna just stared at it, then she finally placed it back down, closing her eyes and taking a deep breath.

Turning towards the kitchen, she walked in to where the three young dragons were waiting. Ember looked up at her mother with wide eyes, a soft frown on her face.

"Relax, Ember. You're not in trouble," Edna said, sitting down next to the group of dragons. Glancing around at their worried faces, she turned to Ember. "Ember... Are you absolutely sure you want to learn to fight?"

Ember glanced over to Legend and Cynder, who looked back at her with concern. Glancing back over to her mother, Ember hesitated.

"Why...?" she asked.

"This isn't a trap, Ember," Edna said, closing her eyes. "I just want to know if you're really dead set on this. Your father said that it's better I know now so I can sign you up for the dojo before our house catches fire."

Ember blinked, glancing at Legend and Cynder one last time before looking at her mother. "...I'm sure. I want to be able to take care of myself without others having to worry about me."

Edna reopened her eyes, a look of indifference on her face. Forcing a smile, her expression softened.

"Very well. I'll call them up tomorrow," Edna said, turning around. "For today, please, no more training."

Ember watched her mother walk out of the kitchen, a frown beginning to crease her face. Looking back at Legend and Cynder, she closed her eyes. Cynder raised a paw and placed it on her back. Glancing over to her, Ember gave a soft smile.

About an hour or so later, things had, for the most part, calmed down considerably. Ember was laying on the couch, watching TV as

Legend and Cynder lay on the floor, giving occasional glances towards the moving-picture box. Cynder raised an eyebrow.

"I really don't get the point of watching others go about their daily lives," Cynder said, glancing back over to Legend. "Seems rather creepy to me."

"I think Sparx told me that a lot of them on there are just actors. Like, it's not really their actual lives that are being shown, more like a play," Legend said, glancing over to Cynder. "Regardless, I still don't get it, either."

The two shared a chuckle. Cynder scooted a bit closer to Legend, closing her eyes as she brushed her cheek against his, a smile on her face. Legend paused, forcing a mock smile as he nuzzled her. Pulling away shortly after, he cleared his throat.

"U-uh...Cynder? Can I ask you something?"

A blank expression on her face, Cynder glanced at him. "Sure. What is it?"

Legend looked away, a blush on his face while he glanced downward. "This is going to sound weird, but...I want you to answer me honestly." Legend looked back over to Cynder. "Why...why are you with me?"

Cynder blinked and tilted her head. "Huh?"

"Why do you love me?"

Cynder narrowed her eyes, raising an eyebrow. "What brought this on?"

Legend paused before turning away, head hung low as he closed his eyes.

"I guess you could say it was a...bad dream," Legend said, shaking his head. Glancing back at Cynder, he murmured, "I know I shouldn't

be worried about stuff like that, but...I just... With everything that we're being forced to take in with the loops, I just wanted to reassure myself that some things are still the same."

Cynder sat emotionless for a few seconds before she closed her eyes with a small smile. "I think I understand. All this has been a lot for me to take in, too." Cynder opened her eyes, her smile growing wider. "Let me put those fears to rest. I still love you, Spyro, and always will."

"Why?"

"Do I really need to say it?" Cynder asked, an amused expression on her face as she tilted her head. Glancing towards Ember and seeing that she was fully focused on what the magic picture box was showing, Cynder turned back to Legend and nuzzled his cheek.

"Spyro... You saved me. You gave me a second chance when no one else would," Cynder said, placing a paw over Legend's. "You were always there for me. Even when I saw myself as nothing but a monster, you refused to give up until you made me realize that wasn't the case." Cynder sighed, lowering her head as she closed her eyes. "Even now, when I'm still having a hard time getting over it, you're still here for me, helping me get through it. Even during my...first few misadventures in the loops, you never left my side."

Cynder raised her head, a soft smile on her face as she opened her eyes. "You're a wonderful dragon, Spyro, and not a day goes by that I'm not grateful that I managed to end up with you, especially with how unlucky my life in general tends to be."

She leant forward, giving Legend a kiss on the check. Legend smiled, but his smile didn't reach his eyes. He let out a barely audible sigh and was quick to mentally thank whatever deity that wasn't plastered at the moment that Cynder hadn't heard him. Cynder pulled back slightly and glanced down, a blush on her face.

"Really, I should be asking you these questions..." Cynder said, giving a slight sigh. "I mean, you know what I'm talking about. What made you willing to trust me? To get close to me after...you know."

Legend watched as Cynder silently motioned to Ember in the background. Taking the hint, Legend gave a smile. If nothing else, this loop was making him a master in speaking in code.

"I guess you could say it was just feeling I had," he said, looking Cynder in the eyes. "When I first saw the real you, I could just feel that you weren't like what everyone thought you were." He took a deep breath, closing his eyes. "You deserved a second chance after all that happened to you, and most importantly, you needed someone to show you things weren't like you believed."

Legend placed one of his paws atop Cynder's, reopening his eyes as he looked deep into her emerald gaze. "I'm glad I got to be that dragon. In the process of helping a broken soul recover, I discovered the wonderful dragoness that was there. You were the only thing that kept me going back in baseline, and I can't imagine my life without you. Don't you ever doubt that."

Legend leant forward, kissing Cynder on the forehead. Cynder gave a slight chuckle, glancing downward with a small smile. Pulling back, the two dragons stared at each other, lost in each others' gaze.

"Cynder? Can you come upstairs for a few seconds? I need your help with something!"

Cynder jumped at her loop mother's voice echoing throughout the house. Glancing upward, she frowned before turning back to Legend.

"Sorry, but Edna's calling," Cynder said, giving a smirk. "I'm still not used to having parents, but I think I know enough to know that it's a bad idea to keep them waiting."

Legend chuckled, taking a deep breath. "Yeah. Trust me, it is."

Watching as Cynder got up and headed towards the stairs, Legend smiled until she was just out of sight. As she went up the stairs and disappeared onto the second floor, Legend sighed, hanging his head. A frown on his face, he closed his eyes.

Above on the second floor, Cynder walked down the hallway. For the briefest of seconds, she paused, glancing back towards the stairs with a small frown on her face. Shaking her head, she turned back towards the hall and slowly made her way down it.

Coming towards what she assumed was her parents' bedroom, she pushed her way through and saw Edna moving around several boxes.

"What's going on?" she asked, tilting her head.

Edna took a deep breath, blowing some dust off the box she was holding. Looking back, she gave a soft smile. "Oh, I decided to clean out the closet while I was going through some old mementos. There's a bit more in here then I remember, though, so I needed an extra set of paws."

Edna shook her head, closing her eyes as she took a moment's pause. Glancing back over to Cynder, her expression softened. "You don't mind, do you?"

"No, not at all," Cynder said, quickly heading over to her loop mother.

"Thank you," Edna said, turning and setting the box down. "Just bring out any box you get your claws on. Most of it isn't anything fragile or the like."

Cynder nodded, heading over to the closet space. Several boxes were pressed against the walls of the small room, most of which were dusty and appeared to be worn and tattered. Cynder tilted her head, grabbing one of the boxes that didn't have anything on top of it and dragging it out of the closet. Heading over to Edna, she let go of the box and looked up to her.

"What's in these boxes, anyway?"

"Oh, just some old mementos from back in the day," Edna said, reaching down into the box and beginning to shuffle around in it.

Pulling out a small book, Edna gave a soft smile. Cynder eyed the book curiously as she walked closer. The book had several drawings of eggs on it, all colored with soft pastels, with the words 'Hatchling Years' written near the top. Cynder raised an eyebrow, looking up at Edna.

"What is this?"

"It's Ember's hatchling book, back when she had just hatched from her egg," Edna said, gently holding the book in her paws. "I was wondering where this wound up..."

Edna stood silent for a few seconds, gazing down at the book while Cynder continued to give her an odd look. Closing her eyes, Edna took a deep breath before looking down at Cynder.

"Cynder? Would you mind taking care of the rest of the boxes?" Edna asked, turning towards the door. "I think I need to sit down for a few moments."

"Uh...sure," Cynder said, getting up and heading back towards the closet.

Cynder paused, glancing back as Edna left the room. After a few seconds of silence, Cynder headed back over to the box. Glancing down into it, she noticed another book similar to the one Edna had taken with her. Picking it up, she opened it to a random page. Her eyes widened at the picture of a young smiling hatchling looking up at the camera.

Turning the page, she found more pictures of herself as a hatchling, all of them smiling at the camera. She took a moment's pause, placing a paw on one of the pictures. Cynder closed her eyes, sitting

in complete and utter silence. It was an odd feeling looking at those pictures. Never once had she thought there would be any recollection of her younger self smiling, and the oddest part was, despite not actually being there...she could almost recall those moments as clear as day.

She sighed. Loop memories were an odd thing.

'Still... Would have been nice to have a childhood like that...'

Looking back into the book, she began flipping through the pages. Not a second later, she came to a page that made her eyes shoot wide open and her jaw drop. All it took was one look at the picture of her hatchling self in a bright pink dress with a mock golden tiara on to make her slam the book shut. She glanced around, making sure she was the only one in the room.

'...Neither Spyro is allowed to read this book. EVER,' Cynder thought, placing the book back into the box. Heading back towards the closet, she paused, glancing back at the box with a frown.

'I wonder if Edna would object to me setting that picture on fire?'

Shaking the thought off, Cynder made her way into the closet and looked at the boxes scattered about, most of which were stacked atop one another. Cynder looked up at one of the higher stacks with frown. Exactly how Edna expected her to get those down, she wasn't sure. Looking downward, she noticed a single box wedged between two stacks of boxes. Perfect.

Cynder walked over to the box and pulled on it with a strong tug. The box bent slightly as she pulled, but nonetheless stayed jammed between the two stacks. Cynder groaned, leaning forward and placing her paws behind the box, pulling with all her might as she dug her claws into the carpet. The box slowly began to move as the two stacks began trembling violently. Then, with one final tug, Cynder managed to free the box.

All the other boxes came falling down in a loud series of crashes, catching the closet door and slamming it shut.

Under the box rubble, an ebony paw forced its way out with a swift punch. Cynder groaned, picking herself out of the boxes as she grabbed her head. Taking a deep breath, she opened her eyes to a veil of darkness. She blinked, glancing around with wide eyes.

"Hello?" she called, trying to balance herself atop the boxes.

Cynder stumbled as she tried to move forward, slamming into a wall to the side. Trying again to regain balance, she took a step forward, only to bump into another wall muzzle-first. She grunted, rubbing her muzzle as she closed her eyes. Slowly reopening them, she paused. Holding her forepaws out to her sides, she placed her paws against the walls of the closet, her forelegs barely extending to their full length.

She began to look around more rapidly as she placed her paws in front and behind her, only to be met with more walls just as close together. Her breathing began to grow heavy as she glanced around in the darkness, her emerald eyes opened wide.

"Hello! Can anyone hear me!?"

Cynder tried to turn around, losing her balance on the boxes and smacking into a wall. She stumbled back, smacking into another one, and scowled. The walls seemed to be closing in around her, the air becoming heavier by the second. The darkness was suffocating. Cynder darted forward, smacking into another wall head-first. Shaking it off, she placed her paws on the wall, finally finding the door handle. Yanking on it with all her might, she closed her eyes tightly as her breathing became more rapid.

"Help! I'm trapped in here!" Cynder yelled, letting go of the handle and beginning to ram into the door repeatedly. "Let me out! Let me out!"

Cynder reeled back, summoning her wind element as she shot forward. The door cracked. Cynder reeled back again. With one final strike, the door splintered violently and Cynder slid out onto the bedroom floor, trembling as she continued to take deep breaths. The sound of rapid paws came echoing from the hall as an adult dragoness and two younger ones looked in through the door. Edna's eyes went wide, her jaw dropping.

"What happened here!?" she asked, glancing down at Cynder with a stern expression.

Cynder hardly lifted her head, eyes slightly moist as she struggled to catch her breath. She looked forward, past her loop mother, at Legend and Ember giving her odd looks, and took a deep breath, collapsing to the ground as she closed her eyes. Edna's expression softened at the sight of her daughter shaking on the ground.

Legend was the first to step forward, walking over and draping one of his wings over her body. Cynder looked at him out of the corner of her eye, giving a soft sigh, her head lowering to the ground.

"I had no idea you were claustrophobic."

Legend looked at Cynder with a concerned glint in his eyes, a soft frown on his face as he draped one of his wings over her. Legend, Cynder and Ember were sitting down at the table in the kitchen after the little event upstairs. Edna was currently busy picking up pieces of splintered wood from what was once a closet door. Cynder took a deep breath, closing her eyes as her head hung low.

"N-neither did I," she said flatly, resting her head on the table.

Legend rubbed Cynder's back gently, glancing upward as if staring off into space. "Now that I think about it, I don't think you've ever really been in a tightly cramped space before," he said, looking back down at Cynder. "Unless..."

Legend's eyes flickered towards Ember for a second before returning to Cynder. Cynder glanced at him out of the corner of her eye, giving a soft sigh.

"Not sure," she said, looking forward as her body hung limp on the table. "Maybe... I don't know. I don't exactly like to remember back to those times."

Legend frowned, watching Cynder close her eyes as she rested her head miserably on the table. He leant forward until his head was next to hers.

"Well, just remember. I'm always here for you," Legend said, giving a small smile. "If you ever need someone to talk to about it, don't forget that."

He leant forward and gave Cynder a kiss on the cheek. Cynder glanced over with a small smile on her face and Legend sat up with grin. He opened his mouth but, before he could say anything more, a shout rang out through the house.

"Ow! Splinter!" Edna's voice exclaimed. "Can someone please lend me a paw up here?"

Cynder raised her head, about to get out of her chair, but Legend was quick to place a paw on her back.

"Let me," he said. "You just rest for now."

Cynder watched as Legend got out of his chair and headed towards the living room. She paused before slowly turning back to the table, a small frown on her face as she rested her head back down. She gave a deep sigh, closing her eyes. Several seconds passed before she reopened them, only just realizing there was a pink dragoness sitting across from her, wide-eyed and blinking slowly.

"Cynder?" Ember asked, tilting her head. "Are you and your Spyro...?"

Cynder gave a small smirk, closing her eyes. "I guess there's no hiding it now, is there?"

Ember raised an eyebrow. "How come you didn't tell me sooner?"

"Didn't want to seem like I was flaunting anything in your face, considering early on this loop..."

Ember chuckled, a slight smirk on her face. "Okay, yeah. I think I can understand that." Ember shook her head, giving a content smile. "Well, you don't have to worry. I'm not jealous or anything. I'm not that kind of dragoness. From what I've seen so far, too, both Spyros are very different, so I doubt he'd be my type even though he looks like the Spyro I know."

At this, both dragonesses shared a small chuckle. Cynder raised her head, a slight smile on her face.

"Thanks. Nice to know I'm not annoying you," Cynder said, glancing down with half-opened eyes.

Ember raised an eyebrow, noting that, despite her somewhat content expression, there was an aura of inner discord surrounding Cynder. Eyes shimmering as she gave a comforting smile, Ember placed her paws on the table.

"Hey, what's wrong?" she asked, tilting her head. "You seem a bit depressed. You still having trouble over what happened upstairs?"

"Eh...no. Or yes... I guess? I don't know," Cynder said, closing her eyes as she gave a deep sigh. "Ember? Can I tell you something?"

"Of course. Lay it on me," Ember said, the comforting smile never leaving her face.

Cynder took a deep breath, lifting her head to look at Ember. She averted her eyes and was silent for a few seconds. Finally, she managed to look back at Ember.

"So... You know that my world's Spyro and I are together..." Cynder said, averting her eyes again.

"Yeah," Ember said, tilting her head. "And?"

Cynder paused, attempting to look Ember in the eyes for several moments. Finally, she closed her eyes, taking in a soft breath. "It's just that...sometimes, I can't help but feel that the only reason we're together is because he pities me..."

"Huh?"

Ember raised an eyebrow, leaning back in her chair. Cynder opened her eyes and, upon seeing Ember's confused expression, turned her gaze towards the ground.

"My baseline. I'd rather not go into the details, but..." Cynder said, closing her eyes, "...it wasn't exactly perfect, to put it very mildly. It was a rather...traumatizing experience. Again, putting it mildly."

"Why? What happened?"

Cynder paused, biting her lower lip as she looked at the ground. Seeing this, Ember quickly raised her paws in front of her. "Uh, you don't have to tell me about it if you don't want to..."

Cynder went silent for a few seconds, eyes closed as she took silent breaths. Finally, she opened her eyes. "...Remember when I told you about how the eggs were scattered throughout my world?"

"Yeah. Why?" Ember asked, raising an eyebrow.

Cynder sighed. "I...I may not have been telling the whole truth there."

Ember tilted her head. "What do you mean? What really happened, then?"

Cynder closed her eyes, going silent for a few seconds.

"I was...captured when I was an egg, stolen away from the others by the apes," she began, head hung low. "I suppose you know by now how I come from a world of war, right?"

"I think I heard something about that," Ember said, giving Cynder a concerned look.

"W-well..." Cynder's voice shook as she closed her eyes. "The apes were Malefor's—the one who started the war—main forces at the time. They attacked the temple on the Year of the Dragon when I was born in an attempt to get Spyro's egg. Though the guardians fought valiantly to protect them, and one of them succeeded in sneaking Spyro's egg out...the others weren't so lucky."

"Oh my... You don't mean...!?" Ember gasped as she placed her paws over her mouth, her eyes going wide.

"Unfortunately...yes," Cynder said, shaking her head. "As far as I know, only two dragon eggs survived the temple raid. Spyro's...and my own."

"That's...that's just... How could anyone do such a horrible thing!?" Ember exclaimed, a scowl on her face as she slammed her paws on the table.

"The apes are foul beasts in my world," Cynder said, opening her eyes. "They will do anything to get power, no matter what horrible acts they have to commit." Cynder sighed. "I guess you could say I was 'lucky' in the fact that I survived. Malefor was trapped in Convexity at the time and needed a dragon born in the Year of the Dragon in order to enact a ritual to free him. I think it's a no-brainer that his original intent was to capture my world's Spyro, but since Spyro's egg had already been spirited away to safety, he was forced to adjust his plans a bit..."

"You mean..." Ember muttered, placing a paw over her mouth.

"Yep..." Cynder sighed. "Malefor choose me to be that dragon instead. For years, I was held captive until the day that the ritual would be enacted, and then..." Cynder paused, grasping the side of her foreleg as she bit her lip. "There's some parts about that ritual I really, *really* don't want to go into," she said in a near whisper, closing her eyes tightly.

Seeing the amount of distress it was causing her, Ember gave a sympathetic smile as she placed her paws on the table. "It's alright. I don't want to force you to dig up the past if you don't want to."

"Thanks," Cynder said, opening her eyes slightly as she gave a small smile. It was soon replaced with an indifferent expression and Cynder gave a sigh. "To make a long story short, my world's Spyro saved me just before I was about to meet my end, and for that, I am eternally grateful to him."

"That's nice. At least things eventually got better, right?" Ember asked, a soft smile on her face.

"I guess," Cynder said, glancing down. "A lot of the world never really forgave me for my part in the ritual, though. I've never really even forgiven myself, to be honest..."

"Why?" Ember asked, tilting her head. "From the sound of things, you were a major victim in all of this."

Cynder sighed, closing her eyes as she frowned. "Maybe. It's just... The ritual resulted in a lot of people's lives being torn apart, and it wouldn't have happened if Malefor didn't have a dragon for it. As such, a lot of people blamed me for what happened, and I can't help but feel like they were justified for it," Cynder said, taking a deep breath. "To this day, I still think back on it. If I were just a bit stronger, if I could have escaped before it had happened..."

Ember frowned, gazing at Cynder in silence, unmoving. Then she got out of her chair and walked around the table towards the chair

Legend had been sitting in earlier. Cynder opened her eyes, watching as Ember got up on it.

"Ember? What are you—?"

Cynder was interrupted mid-question when Ember put her forepaws around her, pulling her into a hug. Cynder hesitated for a few seconds, expression blank. Finally, she closed her eyes and rested her head on Ember's shoulder. Several seconds passed before Cynder pulled back into her chair.

"Thanks," she said, a small smile on her face.

"You're welcome," Ember said, giving a sympathetic smile.

Cynder closed her eyes, taking a calming breath before she turned back towards the table. "Anyways, back on topic... This is kind of what I'm talking about. I feel like the only reason he's with me is to make me feel better about what happened to me," she said, shaking her head. "I love him, but...I'm not sure if it's exactly the same for him."

Ember watched as Cynder lay her head down on the table, breathing silently as her body went limp. Ember leant against the table, trying to get in front of her as best she could.

"Well...if he wants you to feel better, that means he must really care about you too, right?" Ember asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I suppose..." Cynder muttered, looking at her from the corner of her eye. She closed her eyes. "I guess I'm not really helping it, either, what with how I'm acting right now. I try not to push my burdens on others, but..."

"It's not good to keep things bottled up, Cynder," Ember said, giving her a concerned look. "Besides, the loops allow you to redo stuff and make things better, right? Surely there must be some way to keep that ritual from happening, right?"

"There is, but... I dunno. It feels disrespectful to all those who lost their lives in baseline because of what happened."

Ember paused, placing a claw on her chin as she glanced upward. Shortly after, she smirked.

"How about this?" Ember asked, lowering her head onto the table, looking Cynder in the eyes as best she could. "We make a monument for all those that were caught up in the ritual each new loop. That way they'll be remembered and you won't have to carry as much guilt about what happened. That sound good?"

Cynder turned her head, glancing over to Ember and looking her in the eyes.

"That...that might help," Cynder said, slowly picking herself up off the table.

"Good," Ember said, giving a smile as she picked herself up as well. "As for your Spyro, the best thing I can tell you is what you made me realize earlier this loop."

Ember closed her eyes as she tilted her head upwards, a small smile on her face. "Just be yourself. Things may be a bit awkward between me and my Spyro at the moment, but it helped me at least become his friend, and that was a major step up from the so-called 'relationship' we had before."

Cynder looked at Ember with an indifferent expression before glancing away, closing her eyes. "What if you aren't sure about who you really are? As far as I can remember, what happened to me, as well as the war, are all I really know..."

"Then I'll help you find who you really are," Ember said, giving a grin as she closed her eyes. "I mean, from what I heard, my Spyro is helping your Spyro do the same, so it's the very least I can do. Life is always about trying new things to see what you like, after all."

"And remember," Ember said, leaning forward as she wrapped her forepaws around Cynder, "in your baseline, people may have known you for what happened in that ritual thing, but here you are just Cynder. A normal dragoness and my sister."

Cynder looked at Ember, who smiled as she hugged her loop sister gently. A smile began to creep onto Cynder's face. She closed her eyes, a single tear starting to form as she placed one of her paws on Ember's forelegs. Several moments passed as the two dragonesses sat like that before Ember finally leant back in her chair.

"Now then, how about we start now?" Ember asked, a small smile on her face. "We might be able to find something in your room your unawake self had that you'd enjoy as well."

Cynder gave a small smile, giving a nod. With a grin, Ember hopped out of her chair, Cynder following shortly after.

Legend sighed, picking up the last piece of splintered wood and placing it into the garbage bag Edna had brought up. Edna smiled, tying the bag up.

"Thanks for the help, Spyro," she said, picking up the bag. "I've got the rest from here."

Legend gave a small smile in return, watching as Edna headed out of the room with the bag in tow. Once she had left the room, however, the smile disappeared from his face. Getting to his paws, Legend walked out into the hallway, making his way down it as he looked around. Cynder. He wanted to make sure she was still okay, on top of...

Legend shook his head, taking a deep breath. Looking forward down the hall, his eyes drooped. There were many things in his baseline that worried him, but never once had Legend thought he'd have to worry about this...

While he was mulling in his thoughts with his head hung low, he stopped when he heard giggling coming from a nearby room. Legend raised his head at the sound of the surprisingly familiar laughter. He turned towards one of the doors, pushing it open slightly to peer inside.

"These are actually pretty good," Ember said, holding a few pieces of paper in her paws.

"I guess. Just wish I knew how my unawake self actually did these..." Cynder muttered, an eyebrow raised as she held the piece of paper sideways.

Legend tilted his head, pushing his way into the room. "What's going on?"

Cynder jumped, looking back at Legend with a slight blush. Clutching the paper tightly to her chest, she cleared her throat. "Uh, well..."

Ember giggled, walking over to Cynder and placing a paw on her shoulder. "Come on. It's alright. Remember, this was unawake you."

Cynder glanced over to Ember with wide eyes. Silently, she turned around, holding the piece of paper out as she glanced downwards, the blush never leaving her face.

"Ember and I were trying to see what my unawake self was into, to...uh..." Cynder said, clearing her throat as she hesitated, "...to give me some ideas on what I might be interested in to help pass time in the loops." Cynder glanced up at Legend, a half smile on her face. "Apparently, my unawake self here liked to draw."

Cynder held out the piece of paper, upon which was a rather decent sketch of what appeared to be a dragoness flying through the skies. Cynder kept her head down, the blush on her face growing brighter as she waited for Legend's response. Legend took the piece of paper delicately in his claws. Several moments passed, and

Legend's blank expression caused the anxiety Cynder was feeling to grow. Finally, he looked up with a smile.

"Looks really good," he said.

"Really?" Cynder asked, raising her head, eyes going wide, still blushing.

"Yeah," Legend said, handing the paper back to Cynder. "I think you should give it a chance. If your unawake self is good at it, there's a good chance you are as well."

Cynder gave a small smile, glancing down at the ground as she let her eyelids droop. Ember looked on with a quiet chuckle, making sure to keep her voice down so Cynder wouldn't take it the wrong way. Legend walked over to Cynder, sitting down with a warm smile.

"You still feeling alright, by the way?"

Cynder closed her eyes, the smile slowly fading from her face. "Yes, I'm fine."

She reopened her eyes. Glancing over to Ember from the corner of her eye, Cynder saw a small concerned frown on her face. Cynder glanced downward before looking back up at Legend.

"Hey...Spyro?" Cynder asked, forcing herself to meet his eyes. "Can I...ask you something?"

"Sure," Legend said, tilting his head. "What is it?"

"W-well..." Cynder muttered, glancing down.

Cynder could feel Legend's gaze on her, an air of concern about him. She sighed, part of her mentally kicking herself over feeling this way. Legend only wanted to make sure she was okay because he cared about her. Despite this, here she was, about to tell him to cut that out. It sounded so selfish, so cold... Especially after everything he'd done for her.

She shook her head, looking up with a mock smile. "Never mind. It was just something silly."

Legend raised an eyebrow as Cynder walked over to him with a smile. She paused at his side, giving him a kiss on the cheek. Legend smiled, looking over to her. "What was that for?"

"Nothing, really," Cynder said, a small smile on her face. "Just glad that I have you as my mate."

With that, Cynder walked out of the room with a smile. Legend watched as she left the room, a smile on his face. Once she was out of sight, Legend turned away from the door, his gaze drifting to the ground as his smile waned. He closed his eyes, standing in complete and utter silence. When he reopened his eyes, a small frown on his face, he noticed Ember was still in the room.

The two dragons looked at each other awkwardly, neither one budging an inch or daring to speak up. Finally, Legend was the first to break the silence by clearing his throat.

"So...uh..." he said, scratching the back of his head. "Just realized this is the first time we've been alone together."

"Yeah..." Ember muttered, sitting down as she scratched the back of her head. "Uh, if you're worried about the fact that I had a crush on my Spyro, you don't need to be," she said with a small smile. "Besides my promise extending to all Spyros, I know you're already with Cynder. I don't go after dragons who are already in relationships, besides the fact that Cynder is a sister to me."

The silence slowly crept back in, though Legend's posture became noticeably more relaxed. Ember gave a smile, prompting Legend to do the same. A few seconds passed before Ember raised an eyebrow, tilting her head. "Hey, mind if I ask you something?"

"Hm?" Legend muttered, raising his head.

"When Cynder exited the room, you seemed depressed..." Ember said, a frown on her face. "Is there something bugging you?"

"Eh, no, nothing," Legend said, glancing away with a nervous frown. "I'm perfectly fine."

Ember paused, noticing the obvious distress painted all over Legend's face. She frowned. Legend put on a fake smile. He was hiding something and, from the fact that he didn't start acting this way until Cynder had left the room, she could only assume it had to do with his relationship with Cynder. Her eyes full of concern, Ember walked a bit closer to him.

"Are you sure?" Ember asked, keeping a close watch on Legend's eyes.

"Yes. I'm..." Legend said, his eyes darting all over the place, "...sure."

Ember narrowed her eyes. It was clear that whatever was bugging him wasn't going to be dragged out, and Cynder didn't seem to want to bring up her own problem with him... Ember let out a soft breath. Even if she couldn't get him to talk about it with her, maybe...

"You know, there were a few other reasons why Cynder and I were looking for things she might be interested in," Ember said, her expression softening. "While you were helping my mom clear up the accident with the door, she told me a few things about her baseline."

"She did?" Legend asked, raising his eyebrow. "...How much did she tell you?"

"Quite a bit," Ember said, sitting down. "I get the feeling there were a few details she left out, but she told me that she was part of a ritual in her world that resulted in a lot of lives being lost..."

Legend's eyes were wide as he listened to Ember. True, it sounded like Cynder had left out the part about being the Terror of the Skies, but...

"She also told me how she was often blamed for it and blames herself for what happened," Ember continued, closing her eyes.

"Yeah..." Legend said, lowering his head. "No matter how many times I tell her it wasn't her fault, she doesn't believe me."

Ember opened her eyes, a frown on her face as she saw Legend standing silently in front of her. She closed her eyes and there was a small smile on her face when she reopened them. "Maybe instead of trying to help her cope with it, you should help her move on?"

Legend raised his head, his expression blank. Ember kept her expression steady.

"Listen, I know I likely don't know the full story, but from what I heard, it really affected her," Ember said, her voice taking on a more serious tone. "I know this might be bold to say, but you can only help some people deal with traumatic experiences for so long." Ember glanced down, a frown on her face.

"There are some things in our lives that we can never really get over no matter how hard we try... We can learn to deal with it as best we can, but it will always be there with us, popping up when we're feeling at our lowest," she said, looking back up with stern glance. "We can help people cope with it, but sometimes, it's just better to help the ones we care for move on. To put the past behind them as best they can. To weigh down those bad memories with many new, infinitely better ones." Ember closed her eyes, taking a deep breath. "Really, it's the best we can do for them. For everyone."

Legend blinked, watching on as Ember sat silent for a few seconds.

"That was..." Legend finally spoke up, "surprisingly insightful."

Ember giggled, a smile on her face. "Yeah, no one really expects the bright pink dragoness to be so deep," she said, giving a wink as she stuck her tongue out.

At this, both dragons shared a laugh. As it soon died down, Ember shook her head.

"Seriously, though...I guess you could say I've always had a knack for sensing emotions," she said, glancing downward. *'At least, emotions that don't relate to someone not being interested in your advances...'*

Shaking that thought off, Ember looked back up at Legend. "From the way Cynder spoke about it, it sounds like she wants to move on. To finally look towards the future...and not have everyone pity her because of what happened."

Ember walked forward, stopping at Legend's side as she glanced over to him. "You should help with that by talking to her about it. Talking about something that worries you or the one you love is always a good thing, to help finally put those fears to rest."

Ember walked over to the door, pausing for a second before she glanced back at Legend. "...No matter what it is that worries you."

With that, Ember left the room. Legend looked over to the door in silence, before glancing down, his eyes wide. From what little he had heard from Classic, he'd never expected Ember to be so insightful. True, Classic had still been afraid of her because of her crush at the time, but still.

Legend closed his eyes. Maybe she was right... For the longest time, he had always been there for Cynder to help her deal with the past, but never once had he helped her move on towards the future. How many times, when he'd asked her if she was alright when she seemed depressed to him, had he unintentionally dug up the past that she just wanted to forget? Legend sighed. The best of interests may have been there at heart, but still...

And what if Cynder really did only like him because she was grateful to him? What if he himself was a reminder of what had happened? What if, in her attempts to move on, to walk down the path to the

future and to forget the past, she'd eventually end up walking it without him...?

Legend shuddered, eyes closed as he sat down.

Still... It wasn't fair to her, to keep things the way they were out of fear of losing her. If she wanted to move on, to forget about the past, what right did he have to constantly remind her of it, to keep things the way they were, out of fear of losing her...?

Legend sighed, getting to his feet and heading towards the door. He lifted his head, his expression stern as he headed out into the hall. Adrenaline pumped through his veins as his heart began to beat faster. Even if he was terrified by that thought, all he knew was one thing.

He loved Cynder and he wanted her to be happy... Even if that meant they couldn't be happy together.

Cynder sat at the table in the living room, staring down at a piece of paper in front of her. She looked towards the pencil sitting next to it. Her expression blank, she raised her paw, shifting one of her claws into an opposable position. She frowned, shivering slightly at the sight. Closing her eyes, she pushed the uncanny feeling as far back as it could go. The loops caused a bunch of weird things to happen to one's body, so if she couldn't get over having an opposable claw, how could she get over anything else that could possibly happen?

Giving a sigh, she picked the pencil up and held it over the paper, glancing upward as she placed her free paw to her chin. With a small smile, she began to start sketching out a rough circle on the paper, in-loop memories already starting to kick in.

At the other side of the room, Legend walked in quietly, seeing Cynder sitting at the table. He paused, expression dull as he watched on. He took a deep breath, standing up as straight as he

could on four legs, and walked over to her. Approaching the table, he sat down on one of the chairs.

"Hey," he said, looking over with a smile.

Cynder paused, looking up. A smile appeared on her face when she noticed Legend sitting next to her. "Hey."

Legend watched as Cynder returned her focus to the paper. Glancing down at it, he cringed at the sight of her paw. He glanced back up to Cynder, an apprehensive look on his face.

"Uh... Do you have to do that while drawing?"

"I don't really have a choice," Cynder said, closing her eyes. "Dipping my tailblade or claws in ink and trying to do it that way would end up ripping the paper, for the obvious reason." Cynder raised her paw, her shimmering metallic claws reflecting the light coming through the window. She shook her head, a small smirk on her face. "Odd how they seem to be natural for this loop, even though I know for a fact that they aren't."

Cynder looked back down at the paper, an amused smile on her face. "Besides, who knows what other odd stuff the loops could do to us. It's best we start adapting to it and moving on to the next weird thing in the future." Cynder paused, her lips curling into a frown. "...No matter how uncanny it may seem."

Though it lessened, the frown was still firmly on Legend's face as he listened to Cynder's explanation. He glanced away, looking down and closing his eyes. The only sound in the room came from Cynder sketching away on the piece of paper. Legend reopened his eyes shortly after, looking over at his mate with a frown.

"Cynder? Can I ask you something?"

"Hm?" Cynder asked, glancing up from the paper. "What is it?"

The apprehensive look returned to Legend's face, his eyes darting downward as Cynder gazed toward him. "Does it bug you...when I ask if you're doing alright?"

Cynder raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

Legend paused, finally meeting Cynder's eyes. "You know. When I ask if you're alright in regards to...certain events."

Cynder looked on with a blank expression, tilting her head as Legend appeared to freeze under her gaze. "Ember told you about our conversation?"

"Not directly," he said, glancing toward the side as he scratched the back of his neck. "But I was able to get what she was implying."

Cynder closed her eyes, softly exhaling as she turned back to the paper in front of her. She opened her eyes slightly, but didn't look up. "Spyro?"

Legend looked at Cynder intently until she glanced at him again. "Do you love me?" she asked.

"Huh?" Legend asked, tilting his head. "Of course I do!"

"How can you be sure?" Cynder asked, raising her head and looking him in the eyes, her expression stern. "Are you sure that you just don't feel bad for me? That the only reason you're with me is because you pity me?"

"Cynder..." Legend said, moving closer to her as he gave a small frown. "I'm not sure if I can say this properly without it sounding a bit harsh...but I don't pity you."

Cynder raised an eyebrow, taken aback. She sat up in her chair. Legend shook his head.

"Cynder, I'm sorry if it seemed that way, but the main reason I'm like that is because I love you. I don't like seeing you sad or still beating

yourself up over what happened," Legend said, looking Cynder in the eyes. He paused, glancing down with a frown. "Though, I guess all I was doing was reminding you about it when I really should have been helping you forget..."

Legend glanced up, giving a soft smile. "Cynder, I love you for many reasons. You're smart, you're attractive, and you've always been there for me, even when the world was crumbling around us."

Cynder glanced down, a small smile on her face as her cheeks began to glow. Legend smiled softly, leaning forward and placing his wings around her.

"Cynder, I love you for you, and I'm sorry if I haven't made that clear enough."

With that, Legend gave her a kiss on the forehead. Cynder's smile grew wider at the gesture and she lifted her head up to look Legend in the eyes.

"Sorry I doubted that," she said, leaning forward to rest her head on his chest. "You've always been so nice to me... I'm really lucky to have you as a mate."

Spyro gently nuzzled Cynder's forehead, but he paused shortly after. He glanced down, a frown on his face as his eyelids drooped. With a deep breath, he moved back slightly. Cynder raised her head, looking up at him curiously.

"Spyro?" she asked, tilting her head. "What's wrong?"

Legend kept his gaze firmly on the ground before finally working up the courage to look Cynder in the eyes. "Cynder? You remember earlier today how you said you were grateful for everything I've done?"

"Yeah. Why?"

Legend closed his eyes, taking a slight breath as he frowned. It was now or never. He needed to know whether or not what she felt for him was genuine, even if it meant being met with a harsh outcome.

"I don't suppose there's any other reasons...are there?"

Cynder raised an eyebrow, concern written all over her face. "Why?"

He sighed, head hanging low. "I guess you could say this was brought on by that bad dream." Legend closed his eyes, leaning back in his chair. "Last night I had a dream where I was fighting my dark form. In his attempts to demoralize me, he brought up our relationship." He shook his head, unable to look Cynder in the eyes. "I know I shouldn't be worried about this, and I'm ashamed that I'm even considering it this way, but... He brought up that what you feel for me might not really be love, that it was just you being grateful to me for..."

He turned away, unable to complete his sentence. "Forget it. I shouldn't even be considering this," he said, already slipping out of his chair. "If you're mad at me now, I understand. I'll just go wait by the door..."

"Spyro."

Legend sat back up in his chair, looking over to Cynder with wide eyes. A soft pair of scaly lips pressed against his. Cynder pulled back, a soft smile on her face, and Legend blinked, his mouth hanging slightly open.

"You're not mad?" was the only thing he could think to say.

Cynder shook her head, a small smile on her face. "You weren't mad when I brought up my worries. I guess we both had something we were worried about."

She moved closer, wrapping her wings around him.

"Spyro, I may be grateful for everything you've done, but it's not the only reason I love you," Cynder said, pulling back slightly to look Legend in the eyes. "I have many reasons why I love you."

"Really?" Legend asked, eyes wide with pleading enthusiasm. "Like what?"

Cynder smirked, looking at Legend with loving eyes. "Well, for starters, you're always so determined. You never give up despite the odds, even when things seem hopeless. That's something I really like about you."

"Well, the fate of the world is usually riding on my shoulders most of the time..." Legend said, giving a sheepish smile.

Cynder chuckled, leaning forward and resting her head on Legend's shoulder. "You're also very kind and comforting. You'd never abandon someone in trouble and you'd do everything you can to help them."

Legend glanced down, a small smile on his face. Cynder grinned, moving closer.

"You're also really nice to look at," she whispered, chuckling slightly at the blush glowing brighter on Legend's face. Cynder pulled back, smiling as she looked Legend in the eyes. "Feeling better?"

"Yeah," Legend said, glancing up with a soft smile. "Sorry I doubted your feelings."

Cynder leant closer, placing her paws on Legend's shoulders as she gazed softly into his eyes. "I'm sorry I doubted yours, too."

They wrapped their wings around each other in a loving hug. Several seconds passed before they looked each other in the eyes. With a gentle motion, they leant forward and their lips met, eyes closing as they let the moment take them in silent enjoyment, hoping it would never end.

A pink head poked slightly out from behind the kitchen doorframe. Ember looked on with a smile, giving a soft chuckle. She sighed, turning away to give the two dragons their privacy, and shook her head, the smile refusing to leave her face.

(A/N: And there we have it folks. After a few chapters of filler-y shenanigans, we finally got the rewrite chapter done. Overall, despite taking a while to get done, there's surprisingly not a lot to say. Went a bit more in depth with Legend and Cynder's relationship, which not a lot of people do with their stories. Was going to leave things a bit more ambiguous towards the end there if Cynder's feelings were true or not, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized she does have legitimate reasons to like him. Plus, what can I say? I'm too much of a nice guy to pull punches like that.

Also, the bit about Cynder having claustrophobia. That's just a bit of personal head-canon I have over how Cynder spent most of her early life probably locked up in a cramped cell, and then another part of it not having control of her body. True, it means it's a bit Freudian, but if ever there was a reason to develop a phobia because of early life trauma...

Anyways, with this rewrite out of the way, we can finally get back to the main story at hand, and since we have quite a few additional chapters of this arc that have been waiting on the sidelines, expect a bit of mega-arc spam in the upcoming weeks.

Anyways, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out. Until then, this is TokoWH, signing off. Have a nice day!)

Fauning over you (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

(Fused 1.1 continued) (Feat: Ukelele, Toko, AbZ)

Finally. After thousands of loops and an excruciating morning with his brother, Classic finally had time with Elora to spend. In a normal situation this wouldn't be so significant to him, but there appeared to be an unfortunate constant in the loops that Classic intended to fix. Whenever he encountered the faun, she was preoccupied with a multitude of obligations ranging from mounds of paperwork to maintenance of inter-realm relations, whatever that meant.

She slaved away, and for what? So she could forget everything and start over on the next loop? It wasn't fair, Classic thought, and if he and she could start something together, Elora would start looping and it would be possible for her to take the vacation she deserved.

At least, in theory. It took more than a few loops for his best friend Hunter to retain memories, while Ember caught on pretty early, even though their relationship was one-sided. These trends were confusing, but Classic kept an optimistic outlook as he and Elora made their way to the ice cream parlor.

"So, tell me about that shield of yours."

"Oh, that thing? Uh…" he stammered, attempting to buy time so he could figure out how to avoid telling the faun how he'd thwarted his brother's attempt to boil him in lava with a harebrained idea.

"It was really hot last month, so I tried to experiment with refrigeration spells and water. Of course, I had to try using telekinesis with it, too, and I found myself freezing in a shell of ice and water."

At that moment, Classic caught Elora rolling her eyes and addressed that post-haste.

"Yeah, yeah, I done goofed. Anyways, I was going to call it quits and ask my mom if I could go to the pool, until I noticed that a bad scrape from a skateboarding spill was almost completely healed. I took that fall the day before, so the only conclusion I could make was that the magic that held the shell together accelerated my natural healing process. Neat, huh?"

Elora donned a sceptical frown and she asked, "Are you sure that you didn't add a healing spell in that mix? It seems pretty far-fetched for body tissues to grow faster in the mere presence of magic currents. It's more likely that sensations of pain were being reduced, rather than scar tissue."

As his expression fell, Classic's tone descended. "...Oh. I guess it wasn't that impressive, then?"

"No, no, you're working with stuff that kids your age don't even bother to try. That's impressive in itself. What you need is someone to teach you about the underlying mechanics that are involved when you work with magic." As Elora finished her diagnosis, they arrived at the ice cream vendor.

"So, how does that work?"

"I'll tell you once we get our ice cream, how's that?"

"Sounds good!" Classic said with confidence. He wasn't expecting Elora to be so skeptical, but considering that she was apparently pursuing a doctorate in the field of magic, she probably knew a lot more than he did. Maybe, if she had the time this loop, the both of them could keep in touch and Elora would hopefully keep her memories on the next loop. After all, this was the closest that she and Classic had been ever since the loops started, so it had to work. Right?

It was still early on in the day when the two had made it to the ice cream parlour, Classic sitting a crossed from Elora as he ate. He glanced up, an eyebrow raised.

"Isn't magic like dragon elements?" He asked, tilting his head.

"Wrong. Let me explain this in another way 'cause I think you got confused." Elora paused to think of an example, as well as to finish her pistachio ice cream.

Blushing, Classic swallowed a bit of his pride as well as his strawberry sorbet to avoid arguing his case with Elora. He had thought he knew a lot about magic considering that he got lessons from Red, but then he had just been taught how to use magic, not what magic was.

"Magic is the suspension of the natural laws of the universe. Imagine that there was book that described every rule that we observe in the universe; objects fall downward, nothing can go faster than the speed of light, et cetera. We use magic to start writing rules of our own, and sometimes we use those rules we write to cancel out the rules that already exist. Once those rules exist, we can set up mechanisms that depend on them."

"So, for example, a teleport spell adds a bit to that law about traveling above the speed of light, and I take advantage of that extra bit to move from point A to point B at light speed?"

"Well, not exactly. I know for a fact that the standard teleport spell works a little differently. Usually, it's best practice in spell-writing to avoid canceling out the current laws of the universe directly; for example, making it so that stuff falls up instead of down. That's because it takes a lot more energy, or mana, to accomplish, and it's more trouble than it's worth. Your ice cream's melting, you know."

"Wha-? Oh, thanks." Classic made haste to finish the frozen treat before it coagulated into a puddle of goo.

"You're welcome. Anyway, the teleport spell uses the warping of space to achieve its effects. Basically, it's already possible to bend space with enough energy, so how far and how much you can teleport depends on the amount of mana you've accumulated."

Mana. Classic had heard that word before and often he ran into problems where he didn't have enough of it to do something. "So what is mana, then?"

"That's...something that us researchers are still trying to answer. There are a bunch of theories out there, but the one that I believe is the most valid is the container theory. In the simplest terms, container theory suggests that mana isn't a substance of any sort, but simply the capacity to store energy. The more mana that you possess, the more energy you can pool from your surroundings, and with more energy, you can perform more intensive tasks with magic."

"Wait, that sounds like—"

"Chi, I know. It explains both chi and magic with elegance and simplicity, and that's why its my favorite theory. We're still trying to prove it, though, but there's a project going on at Snow Mesa that is meant for testing this theory and I heard that they're going to be hiring more scientists. If I can get an internship with one of them, well, I'd be ecstatic to say the least."

At his last spoon of ice cream, Classic's mood dropped a bit. He wanted to keep in touch, but he didn't want to annoy Elora when she was having the time of her life discovering the secrets of the universe. It was always complicated, trying to gain an audience with this faun, and this just made him feel guilty for wanting to talk to her. What he'd give for things to be simple between the two of them, like how it was between him and Hunter.

"Elora?"

"Yeah, Spyro?"

Classic took a deep breath and tried to voice his concern without sounding needy. "I was wondering if...we could keep in touch while you're in university. You're an awesome person to talk to and hang out with and, well, I feel like I might be annoying you if I tried to talk to you when you're so busy."

Elora was silent for a few moments and the awkwardness had definitely settled in. She knew that Classic would ask something along those lines and that didn't make what she had to say any easier. "Spy, I appreciate your...opinion of me. It's good to know that there's someone who looks up to me and thinks that I'm awesome person. But, you have to understand that college involves a ton of work, especially when you try to earn a doctorate."

"I don't mind you calling or texting me, but you have to understand that there'll be other people that require my time and other things that require my attention. You have to understand that, for the most part, I probably won't answer for days or weeks at a time, and I'm afraid that if you do call, you'll feel that I don't care about you when I don't answer, which is totally untrue. You're mature enough to understand this, aren't you?"

He'd expected as much. This was how it always went down and this loop was no exception. "Yeah, I understand."

What he didn't understand was why this happened constantly. The loops were about anything and everything happening, right? He had met himself from another world, for Pete's sake! So, why did this keep happening? Why would the loops be so adamant about keeping him and Elora from being close?

The day continued onward as the sky slowly began to turn a palette of soft orange, purple and blue. Classic had followed Elora around for a greater part of the day, but no matter where they went, it did little to brighten his mood. He sighed as they made their way back to Cynder and Ember's house to pick up Legend, glancing up at Elora glumly as she led the way.

As she turned back to make sure he was still following, Classic quickly lifted his expression, putting on a fake smile. Elora raised an eyebrow. "Spyro? You alright?"

Classic put on a phony grin as he stopped. "Of course! Why wouldn't I be?"

Elora paused, tilting her head. "...Are you still upset about earlier?"

"What, that? No," Classic said, a sheepish smile on his face as he scratched the back of his head. "I understand. You're still busy and all that. College is a pretty busy place and all and I understand that."

Elora's expression remained blank. 'You're still busy' was an odd way of putting it. She placed a hand to her chin as Classic glanced away. It was easy to tell there was more than her being busy at college going on here.

'Come to think of it, the few times I have been with him, I was still in the middle of something and couldn't hang out all that much...' Elora thought, turning around and continuing to walk down the path. *'And now that I think of it, I've never really seen him hanging out with anyone else...'*

It didn't take much to get a general idea of what was going on. Though she felt like there were some details she was missing, it seemed like Classic didn't really have anyone else to hang out with. She let out a low 'hmph.'

"Hey, Spyro?" Elora asked, glancing back at him.

"What?"

"I just realized, with how you've been catching up with me, I haven't really asked how you've been doing," Elora said, a smirk on her face. "So, how are things? You and your brother finally starting to get along?"

"For the most part, I guess," Classic said, keeping pace with Elora as he walked up next to her.

"That's good to hear," Elora said, looking down with a smile. "I remember you two used to fight a lot as kids. The number of times I had to break you two up and force you to apologise was a bit silly."

"Yeah, well..." Classic said, dropping his gaze. "I guess you could say it was a fight that ended up getting way out of hand that convinced us to tone things down a bit."

"Really?" Elora asked, raising an eyebrow. "How bad was it?"

Classic bit his lip, glancing back up at her. "Pretty bad... I'd rather not talk about it, if that's okay with you."

"Fair enough," Elora said, crossing her arms. "You two managed to work it out on your own, though, right? So that's good, at the very least."

"Yeah..."

Elora watched as Classic shook his head. Noting the clear amount of distress it was causing him, she decided it best to change the subject.

"So..." Elora said, glancing around as she put her hands behind her back. "Speaking of your brother, I heard he and Cynder finally got together."

"Oh, yeah... That," Classic said, narrowing his eyes.

Elora tilted her head. "What's the matter? You're not happy for them?"

"Not really," Classic spat, a scowl on his face. "To be honest, it's kind of creepy."

"How so?"

Classic paused, closing his eyes. "It's just... He looks almost exactly like me and seeing someone who looks like me with someone else, especially in love with someone else, is just..."

Elora smirked, leaning down and patting Classic on the back. "It's alright, Spyro. I think I get what you're saying." She picked herself back up, stretching slightly as she placed her hands behind her head. "Maybe you should try hanging out with her more? Might help make things less weird between you."

"I doubt it," Classic said, quickly keeping pace with her.

"C'mon, Spyro," Elora said, glancing over to him with a smirk. "You'll never know unless you try."

Classic merely rolled his eyes, glancing away with a frown. Elora giggled at his demeanor, but quickly stifled it with a deep breath. As the two continued to walk, she looked back down with concern. Lowering her hands down to her back, she raised her eyebrow.

"Ya know, speaking of Cynder... How's her sister been?" Elora asked, raising an eyebrow. "I heard this morning that she was mugged, but I didn't get any of the details."

Classic raised his head, looking up at Elora with a neutral expression. "She's fine. It's convinced her to take up self-defence now, but she seems to be slowly recovering...for the most part."

"That's good," Elora said, a smile on her face as she looked forward. "Nice to know it didn't shake her up too much after that."

"Yeah..."

Elora glanced back down, raising an eyebrow as she noticed the drooping expression on Classic's face. She tilted her head.

"So...speaking of Ember, how have you two been getting along?" Elora asked, giving a warm smile. "I remember she used to have

quite the crush on you."

"Oh yeah... *That,* " Classic said, a frown on his face. Quickly shaking it off, he looked back up at Elora. "Thankfully, she finally agreed that we should stay 'just friends.'"

"Really? That's a shame," Elora said, a smirk on her face that quickly grew into a grin. "I think you two would have made a cute couple."

Classic blinked, looking up at Elora with wide eyes as she walked ahead. She was rooting for him and Ember? That couldn't be... Did that mean she didn't feel about him in the way he felt for her? Was that how baseline Elora felt too? No, that couldn't be... Baseline Elora usually didn't even meet Ember. This just had to be this variant Elora's opinion. Yeah, it had to be just the variant...

Classic sighed. As if any hope he'd had this loop for getting Elora looping hadn't been shattered enough already.

Elora paused, glancing back with a concerned look. "You okay, Spyro?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah!" Classic said, jumping slightly before rushing over to Elora's side. "Just a bit in thought, is all." He looked up at Elora, a sheepish grin on his face.

Elora raised an eyebrow, but chose not to pursue the subject any further as she continued to walk down the path. She glanced over to him, a small smile on her face. "You two becoming good friends?"

"Kind of," Classic said, shaking his head as he walked. "To say things are still a bit awkward between us would be a bit of an understatement, though."

"Break-ups always are like that."

"It's not a break-up!" Classic snapped, looking up with a scowl. "There was nothing there to begin with!"

Elora chuckled, placing a hand in front of her mouth as she tried to regain her composure. Taking a deep breath, she stuck her tongue out at Classic, winking at him with a devious glint in her eyes. "You were always so easy to rile up. Glad to see that hasn't changed since I've been gone."

Classic growled, a scowl on his face as he glanced away. Elora rolled her eyes, placing a hand on Classic's shoulder.

"Are you sure you don't feel anything for her in that way?" Elora asked, tilting her head. "You certainly seemed concern when you heard she was mugged this morning."

"Well, duh! Of course I was concerned!" Classic said, looking up with narrowed eyes. "She was just mugged yesterday! Wouldn't you be worried if one of your friends was mugged?"

"Touché," Elora said, smirking as she glanced forward. "Still, nice to know she's okay, right? A bit interesting she decided to take up self-defence after it, though."

"Yeah... Not something I expected from her..."

Elora glanced back down, raising an eyebrow when she saw Classic's head hanging low.

"What's the matter, Spyro?" she asked, placing a hand on his shoulder again. "You know, for someone who says you're only friends, you seem rather distraught at Ember learning self-defence."

Classic raised his head, looking over at Elora with a frown. "I don't know. It just feels...odd." He took a deep breath, looking forward as his expression went blank. "I never saw Ember as someone who would learn self-defence. She's always been that wide-eyed kid dragoness. I always thought I'd be the one defending her..."

"People change as they grow older, Spyro," Elora said, placing her hands behind her back as she glanced up at the sky. "It's a fact of

life. People grow, they pursue new interests, and old elements of themselves that they didn't like begin to fade." Elora looked down at Classic. "It sounds like she's already begun on that path, what with how she finally decided she was okay with being just friends."

Classic looked back up at Elora, wide-eyed, before looking back down at the ground. "I guess. It's just... I don't know. Part of me always thought things would be like this forever."

Elora looked back down at Classic with a curious expression on her face. "...You know, for someone who says they don't like her in that way, you certainly don't seem to like the idea of you two drifting apart."

"I don't like her that way!" Classic growled, looking up with a scowl. Shaking his head, he looked forward with a frown. "It's just... I don't know, okay? I don't know why it bugs me, but it just does!"

Elora slowed to a stop as Classic halted, closing his eyes as he let out a frustrated sigh. She tilted her head, placing a hand to her chin as she looked down at him.

"Well... If I had to guess," Elora said, crossing her arms as her expression softened, "I think, deep down, part of you did like the way she fangirled over you, even if you didn't like her that way."

Classic blinked, looking up with a blank expression. "What makes you say that?"

"I know you," Elora said simply, a wide grin on her face. "Even when you were young, you liked being the center of attention. Always playing the hero when you could, even if it got you into more danger than it should have."

Classic glanced downward, a slight blush on his face as he scratched the back of his head. Elora chuckled shortly. "Listen, Spyro. Even if she isn't going to be your own personal fan anymore, that doesn't mean you two can't remain friends."

Leaning down, she came face-to-face with Classic, placing one of her hands on his shoulder. He glanced down, his blush becoming brighter.

"Sure... Things are probably going to be awkward for a while, but who knows? You might enjoy having her as a friend more than as a fangirl," Elora said, a soft smile on her face. "The best piece of advice I can give you is to just spend a day with her, to help clear the air. It may be awkward, but it's better than just slowly drifting apart and losing someone who could have been a really good friend."

She got back to her feet, looking down with a smirk. "Now then, we should probably double-time it to your brother. Nina's probably going to start worrying if we don't get back soon."

Classic watched as Elora turned around and began to walk off. His expression remained blank for a few seconds before he quickly shook it off and got to his paws. Quickly catching up to her, he glanced down at the sidewalk as he walked. He didn't quite understand it. Somehow, Elora had read him like a book when it came to what was bugging him about Ember, yet still couldn't figure out how he felt about her.

He sighed silently. This was going to take a lot longer than he thought...

Classic and Elora had finally made their way to Cynder and Ember's house, and were standing in front of the door as Elora knocked. Several seconds passed before Edna opened it, looking down at them with a smile.

"Oh, Elora. I assume you're here to pick up the other Spyro?"

"Yeah. Nina will likely have a fit if I don't get them back soon," Elora said, giving a slight chuckle.

Edna chuckled in response. "Yeah, that sounds like her. Hold on, I'll go get him."

With that, she started back into the house. Classic and Elora waited outside, exchanging awkward glances as they waited. Classic looked in the house curiously when he noticed a pink head poke out from behind the couch. Ember blinked when she noticed him before quickly ducking back down behind it. Classic frowned, glancing at the ground. Elora looked down at him before glancing towards the couch. Placing a hand on her chin, she smirked.

"Hello? Edna?" Elora called, walking into the house. "I just remembered, I need to talk to you about something. Would you mind if I use the phone so I can tell Nina we're going to be a bit late?"

"No problem! Phone's in the kitchen!" Edna's voice echoed out.

Elora smirked, looking down at Classic. Motioning towards the couch, she grinned. Classic blinked, watching as Elora turned around and began to head towards the kitchen. Several seconds passed before he sighed and raised his gaze to the couch, gulping. Taking a deep breath, he headed over to it, walking around it and spotting the pink dragoness sitting on it.

"Hey," Classic said, putting on a smile as best he could.

At this, Ember jumped slightly. Looking over at him, she put on the best smile she could muster as well. "H-hey."

Classic hopped onto the couch, sitting down next to her and following her gaze towards the TV, and the both of them sat stiffly in place, unspeaking. He gazed at Ember out of the corner of his eye, noting her uneasy expression. Just as she was about to glance over, he quickly snapped his gaze forward. Clearing his throat, he shuffled around nervously.

"So..." he said, voice shaky as he tried not to look at her. "What're you watching?"

"Nothing, really," Ember said, her voice in a near whisper. "I was just channel surfing..."

"Oh...uh, cool."

Another silence followed. Classic glanced over at Ember again, who seemed to freeze under his gaze. He looked forward and sighed, shaking his head. "Ember, we need to stop this."

"Stop what?" Ember asked, glancing over at him, her eyes wide and a small frown planted firmly on her face. "We agreed to be friends, right? Spyro, if I did something—"

"No, not that," Classic said, laying down on the couch as he glanced over with a frown. "I'm talking about how we've been acting like we're walking through a field of landmines every time we're together." He closed his eyes. "Listen, Ember. I know things are awkward between us because of...you know, but I still want to be friends."

Ember paused, glancing down in silence for a few seconds.

"I'd like that too," she said, looking back up with a small smile. "I'm just worried, though. I'm worried that I might do or say something that makes things go back to the way they were before." Ember closed her eyes, her lips curling into a frown. "To be honest, I like the idea of us being friends instead of me just being a fangirl who annoys you."

Classic looked at Ember with a blank expression, though his lips eventually curled into a smile. "I'd like that too."

He reached over, placing a paw on Ember's shoulder as he smirked. "Tell you what. How about, before this loop is over, we spend at least one day together. Just as friends, and nothing to do with how we treated each other before."

Ember blinked, looking on with a blank expression. A small smile began to make it's way onto her face. "I'd like that."

Classic smirked. Several seconds passed as the two dragons looked at each other. Finally, Classic held out a paw. "Friends?"

Ember glanced down at his paw before looking up at Classic with a smile, taking his paw in hers. "Friends."

From the kitchen, Elora looked out from behind the doorframe with a smirk.

The group of dragons plus one faun stood outside the house, bidding farewell for the day. Legend smiled at Cynder, giving his mate a kiss before turning away. Classic cringed slightly at this, but Elora was quick to clear her throat, drawing his gaze. With a sigh, Classic looked back at the group with a half-genuine smile.

As Legend walked up to them, Elora smirked down at him.

"I take it your day went well?" she asked, crossing her arms.

"You could say that," Legend said jokingly, an aura of contentment surrounding him.

"Good to hear," Elora said, turning around as she motioned for the Spyros to follow. "Now then, we should probably be heading back. Even though I told Nina everything was okay, she's probably sick with worry right about now."

Legend chuckled. "Yeah, that sounds about right."

With that, the trio began to make their way back to the Spyros' house.

As the sky began to turn darker shades of deep blue and purple, Classic could be found sitting at a desk in his and Legend's room. He looked down at his loop-brother's defensive armor, a frown on his face as he sat silently in front of it. For the past several minutes he

had just been sitting there, staring at the armor as he tried to work up the will to bring up his command line. Every time, though, just as he was about to, his mind always raced back to the events that had happened earlier that day.

Classic glanced back towards the door. Elora was likely downstairs helping his loop mother and Legend with something. He sighed, her earlier words of criticism still fresh in his mind. He had no idea if Elora was this good with magic in baseline, but that still didn't change a thing. His attempts at impressing her had fallen short and she had pointed out the flaws in most of his magical-related works.

Classic glanced back down at the armor, giving a small sigh. He had promised Legend that he would get it back as good as new, but...

'What's the point of trying to learn magic if, even after being trapped in a time warp for who knows how long, a variant can just pop up and show me I'm nowhere near as good as I thought I was?'

"Spyro?"

Classic jumped, instinctively covering the armor as best he could with his forepaws. Glancing back with eyes wide and jaw nearly dropping, he saw Elora standing by the doorway. Internally, Classic cursed his luck. There would be no way to slip the armor into his subspace without her noticing, and the last thing he needed was to spend the rest of the loop on the run. As Elora began to approach, he knew he needed to come up with something, and fast.

Elora walked over to the desk and looked down at the armor. She raised her eyebrow, looking at Classic. "What's this?"

"Uh..." Classic said, looking up at her. "It's just a little project I was working on, sort of an apology gift thing for my bro," he said, glancing back down at the armor as he pulled his forepaws away from it.

"Whoa," Elora said, her eyes going wide. "I wasn't even aware they still made dragon armor."

"Yeah. Had to go through a lot to get this. Ro is a bit of an enthusiast for stuff like this," Classic said, scratching the back of his head as a sheepish smile crept onto his face.

"How could you even afford this, though?" Elora asked, her eyes still wide as she looked at him.

"Well, it wasn't that expensive, to be honest..." Classic said, internally smirking despite his calm exterior. "I got it from one of those junk stores. Apparently the enchantment on it was busted, and the person who owned it didn't know magic and couldn't afford to have anyone fix it, so..." Classic gave a sheepish grin. "...I got really, really lucky, in other words."

Elora blinked, trying to keep her jaw from dropping as she glanced back down at the armor. "Okay, yeah, but still... Even if that's the case, there's no way the allowance Nina gives you should have been enough, even if you saved for months!"

"Well...about that," Classic said, touching his index claws together as he looked away. "You know how most gems are kind of just laying around out in the more rural areas just outside of town?"

"Yeah, but those places are often heavily inhabited by magical entities, a lot of which are very hostile, which is why only those who have graduated from the dojo are allowed..." Elora paused, her eyes widening as she gasped, placing a hand in front of her face. Narrowing her eyes, she placed her hands on her hips, glaring daggers at Classic. "Spyro! Don't tell me you've been sneaking into those places to get gems!"

Classic winced under Elora's glare, glancing down as his eyelids drooped. "C'mon, Elora... I'm fine, aren't I?"

"Spyro, don't you realize how dangerous that is!?" Elora exclaimed, crossing her arms. "It's in the news almost every day about desperate beings sneaking into these places trying to keep gems and not making it out alive! It's a miracle you're still here!"

Classic glanced up, a frown on his face and his eyes full of sorrow. "...Please don't tell Mom?" he asked, giving a mock grin. "I mean, I'm fine now and all..."

Elora looked down at him for several seconds before she sighed, placing a hand on her forehead.

"Fine, but you have to promise me," she said, looking down with a stern expression, arms crossed and a frown on her face. "Never go there again!"

"Alright, fine. I promise," Classic said, relaxing slightly as he sat back down in the chair.

Several moments passed and Elora's expression softened. Looking back down at the armor, she raised an eyebrow. "So, the enchantment on this is busted?"

"Yeah..." Classic said, glancing at it with a frown. "I've been trying to fix it, but so far I haven't had much luck."

"Mind if I take a look?" Elora asked, placing her hand on the armor.

"Uh...s-sure."

Classic looked away as Elora began to focus on the enchantments. He sat silently in his chair, eyes darting every which way, unable to look up at the faun. Finally, Elora whistled, taking her hand off the armor and looking over at Classic.

"Dang... When you said it was busted, you weren't kidding," she said, looking back down at the armor. "No wonder you haven't been having much luck with it."

"Yeah..." Classic glanced away, poking his index claws together and staring at the ground. Elora placed her hand back on the armor, appearing to stare off into space.

"...Doesn't look like it's completely beyond repair, though," she said at last. "If we work together now, we might be able to get it to the point where you can handle it on your own after I leave."

"I-I...I don't know," Classic said, his gaze still fixed on the ground. "I'm beginning to think I should just drop magic altogether..."

Elora raised an eyebrow, taking her hand off the armor as she turned to him. "What? Why?"

"I'm beginning to think I'm not as good at it as I thought I was," he said, a frown creasing his face as he brought his hind legs up to the chair, curling up into a ball.

"What makes you think that?" Elora asked, placing a hand on his shoulder, a worried smile on her face.

Classic sighed, closing his eyes. "It's just... I wasn't having any luck with repairing this thing, and then when I was telling you about all the things I made..."

Elora tilted her head as Classic went silent. She gave a warm smile, putting an arm around him.

"Spyro, I think you misunderstood me," she said, her voice soft. "I wasn't saying you weren't good at magic. It's amazing how much you managed to self-teach yourself. You even figured out how to access a command line! Even a lot of the more magically inclined elders can't do that!"

Classic raised his head, looking at Elora with a blank expression. "Then why was it, this morning, you kept pointing out how my spells weren't all that good?"

"I was pointing out how they could be improved. I never said they weren't good or creative," Elora said, a smile on her face as she looked Classic in the eyes. "In hindsight, I probably should have worded my criticism so it didn't sound so harsh. I never meant to discourage you."

Classic blinked, expression still blank. Glancing back at the ground, he sighed. Elora may have been trying to help, but the fact that she wasn't aware of the loops...

"Thanks, but I still don't know," Classic said, closing his eyes. "I guess, to put it one way... You could say that I feel like, even if I was, like, trapped in a time warp and had all the time in the world, I still wouldn't be able to master it."

Elora blinked, but quickly shook it off. Giving a warm smile, she looked down at the armor.

"I'm pretty sure that's how we all feel about the things that most interest us at some point in our lives," she said, closing her eyes. "I sure know there were moments when I felt like I would never fully understand magic, either." Elora sighed before looking back down at Classic with a smile. "There's an old saying about this kind of thing. Want to hear it?"

Classic raised his head, looking at Elora blankly. Her expression softened as she looked him in the eyes.

"'If a person worked non-stop around the clock, with absolutely no rest or breaks at all, it would still take at least ten thousand hours to master something completely, no matter what it is.'" Elora paused and shook her head. "And even then, they wouldn't be absolutely perfect at it."

Moving back slightly, she looked at Classic with a smile. "Granted, I added that last part on myself, but it still stands." She looked towards the window. "Nobody is perfect at anything, no matter what it is. We all have off days, days when we hit walls, and days when we feel like

we should just give up, even if we've spent well more than ten thousand hours at it."

Elora looked back at Classic, a grin on her face. "The important thing is to never stop trying, especially if it's something we really enjoy. Even when we feel down, those feelings will pass, and we'll push past whatever's blocking us and continue to improve." Elora smirked, scratching the back of her head, her eyes closed. "Really, though, that's life in a nutshell."

Classic blinked, slowly starting to uncurl as he looked at Elora.

She reopened her eyes, giving a warm smile. "The point I'm trying to make is... You like magic, right?"

"Well...yeah. It's one of the few things I'm willing to learn," Classic said, placing his hind legs back on the ground.

"Then you should keep learning it, and don't let a few poorly worded pieces of criticism discourage you," Elora said, grinning as she crossed her arms. "Who knows? Maybe one day it'll be you heading off to the Arcana Engineering Institute as well."

Classic froze as Elora pulled him into a hug, blushing bright pink through his purple scales. As she broke the hug, he quickly glanced downward. "U-uh... Thanks, Elora."

"No problem," she said with a smile. "You feeling better now?"

"Yeah..." Classic said, his blush starting to subside as he glanced back upward.

"Good," Elora said, looking back at the armor. "Now then, how about we work together to get this thing back up and running? I'll be happy to teach you anything I know," she said, glancing at Classic out of the corner of her eye with a smirk.

Classic took a silent, deep breath before giving a smile. "Alright. That'd be nice."

With that, Classic brought up his command line for Elora to see and they began to work on the armor. Occasionally, he would glance over to her and smile. Though she may not have been looping, and though this might have been different from the baseline, she was still the cool faun he had always known. Maybe one day he'd finally be lucky enough to get her looping. Until that day, though, this would be a moment he'd always treasure...

As day became night and the sky turned a dark shade of purple, Elora stood by the door, a smile on her face as she looked over the family of dragons. Nina stood forth, a small frown on her face as she looked down at the faun.

"Are you sure you don't want to stay the night?" she asked, putting on a warm smile. "It'd wouldn't be any trouble, really."

"Thanks for the offer, but I'm afraid I can't," Elora said, her smile turning into a frown. "I need to get a head start if I want to make it to the campus on time. I only really had time for today, and I may have overstayed more than intended."

"That's a shame, dear," Nina said, a frown on her face, but she quickly turned it into a smile. "In any case, it was nice having you visit."

"It was nice visiting," Elora said, a smirk on her face as she crossed her arms.

As the tension of goodbyes hung thick in the air, Classic quickly stepped forward. Looking up with near pleading eyes, he tried his best to keep his cool.

"Hey, Elora?" he asked, trying to keep his voice steady. "How long do you think you'll be at college?"

"Well, normally college lasts at least four years, so..." Elora trailed off, placing a hand to her chin. "Why do you ask?"

Four years. Classic wasn't entirely sure when the loop variant would end, but somehow he got the feeling it would be long before four years had passed. Despite feeling like his last shred of hope had been torn to pieces, he managed to keep a calm exterior. Giving a smile, he scratched the back of his head.

"Oh, no reason," he said, chuckling nervously. "I was just wondering if we could hang out once you graduate."

"Of course," Elora said, a grin on her face. "I'll likely be looking for a job, but I'll have some time to spend before then."

Classic did his best to keep a soft smile on his face even though it felt like a knife had been thrust into his heart. Another loop, another failure to connect with Elora... For the briefest of seconds, Classic's exterior faltered at that thought, though he quickly pushed it aside.

Elora didn't seem to notice, waving as she began turning away. "Well, it was nice catching up."

"Uh, Elora! Wait!" Classic said, quickly stepping forward.

Elora glanced back, looking down at Classic with a blank stare. "Huh? What is it?"

Classic paused, a goofy grin on his face as he stood in place. Finally, taking a deep breath as he stood up on two legs, he walked forward and wrapped his forelegs around her, pulling her into a hug.

"I'll miss you..." he said, just barely loud enough for her to hear.

Elora blinked, a bit taken off guard by the sudden gesture. Expression softening, she placed one of her arms around him, rubbing the frills atop his head with the other. "I'll miss you too."

Classic kept silent, despite the fact that he felt like curling up into a ball. He wasn't exactly the best when it came to understanding emotions, but it didn't take a genius to figure out that, with this simple gesture, Elora thought of him as a little brother. Pulling away, he forced a smile, looking up at the faun who had managed to captivate and yet discourage him at the same time.

Elora smiled, turning away as she headed towards the sidewalk. Waving goodbye, she walked off into the night air.

Classic stood a few steps away from the door, frowning as he watched her walk away. Several seconds passed before he felt a claw on his shoulder, causing him to jump. Looking back and then up, he saw Nina standing over him with a small frown.

"C'mon, Spyro. You'll catch a cold if you stay out here too long."

With that, feeling the gentle nudge she was giving him, Classic began to head back into the house, though his gaze stayed firmly fixated on the path on which Elora had walked away.

The house had been eerily quiet since Elora had left. Classic lay sprawled out on the couch, eyes drooping as he watched the static on the TV screen flicker. He closed his eyes, burying his face into one of the cushions.

"Spyro?"

Classic raised his head, seeing Nina standing next to him. Quick to force a smile, he sat up. "Yeah, Mom?"

"I think we need to talk," she stated, sitting down next to him. Expression softening, she raised her paw and gently placed it on his head. "Spyro... Exactly how do you feel about Elora?"

Classic blinked, sitting up as he quickly put on a phony grin. "Oh, that? I was just sad to see her go, is all. She was my friend since I

was really young, so yeah. Would have liked a few more days to hang out with her. You know, as friends. Just friends."

Nina frowned, looking down at Classic as she withdrew her paw. The phony grin didn't fool her for a second, but if there was one thing she knew about this particular Spyro, trying to press the subject would get her nowhere. Glancing up, she sighed.

"Well, it's a good thing you two are just friends, then," she said, looking back down at Classic again. "I was worried I'd have to explain how Elora is a lot older than you."

Classic almost grunted at the thought. It took every bit of will power he had not to throw the fact that he was stuck in a time loop at that argument. Shaking it off, he glanced away with a frown. His loop mother still had a good point, though. Even if he was way older than any being who wasn't a looper at this point, to Elora he was still that kid dragon who'd saved Avalar...

"There's also the fact that dragons have a naturally long lifespan. Much longer than any other being in the realm," Nina continued, a worried expression on her face. "While love between a dragon and another being is not unheard of...it usually ends in tragedy."

Classic stayed silent, still frowning. He understood what his loop mother was trying to do, and he could tell it was only out of concern, but he didn't care. Once again, being stuck in a time loop kind of deflated that argument. He felt a paw touch his head, gently stroking his frills. Nina closed her eyes, a small frown on her face.

"I was also worried I'd have to explain that you'd need to consider Elora's feelings as well," she said. "Love is a very fickle thing, Spyro. What one may interpret as deeper feelings may in fact just be innocent playfulness. It's hard to tell when someone genuinely means what they say, especially with love, but when they do, you will truly know it."

With that, Nina took her paw off Classic's forehead and stood up. "Now then, dinner will be ready soon. Best to go wash your paws before it's served."

Classic turned his head and watched his loop mother walk away. He closed his eyes and frowned, taking in what she had said.

'I'm sure that Elora genuinely meant what she said. What she said when she was talking to me about love after beating the Sorceress had to have had a deeper meaning...' Classic blinked, raising up as he stared off into space. *'...Right?'*

Classic groaned, resting his head on the cushions as he placed his paws over his face. *'Great... Now I'm not sure anymore.'*

He rolled over onto his back, staring flatly at the ceiling as his body went limp. *'If I could just get one baseline loop with her, I could finally know for sure and she might finally start looping, too...'* Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes. *'But what if she doesn't...?'*

Classic groaned, pulling a cushion over his face, and let out a long, solemn sigh.

'One thing's for sure...' he thought. *'Love was much simpler back when I just hated it...'*

(A/N: Hey everyone, TokoWH here. Remember when I said the Elora mini-arc was done last chapter? Yeah... apparently she just likes the spot light. That said, *for real* this time, the Elora mini-arc is done. Not much to say about this chapter, really. For the most part it's just a wrap-up of sorts. Pretty much all of us just wanted to move on after how long this was taking us, so the ending is a bit ambiguous for now. We plan to address the ambiguousness of Elora's exact feelings for Classic, but for now, we mostly just want to get back to the mega-arc at hand.

Anyways, expect some more mega-arc chapters in the near future, because, as said, we already have a few of those written out at the moment. With any luck, the mega-arc shouldn't take much longer to complete. What'll happen after that? Well, that'll be explained when the time comes...)

As the days go by (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx.)

(Fused 1.1 continued) (Feat: Toko, AbZ, Ukelele)

Legend had been through some pretty rundown places on his adventures, but this 'apartment complex' had to be one of the most decrepit areas he had ever seen. It had been a few days since Elora had visited, and today was the day Classic had finally agreed to teach him to teleport. Legend glanced around, eying the falling apart walls and the debris that covered the ground everywhere he looked. A musty odor assaulted his nostrils. Frowning, he turned to his brother with narrowed eyes.

"Exactly *why* are you taking me here to teach me teleportation?" Legend asked, raising an eyebrow as he tried to tread softly, convinced the floorboards would give out on him at any second.

"Because," Classic said, glancing over to him. "I can't exactly teach you an ability I'm not supposed to know in this world in plain sight."

"Then why didn't we just head to the outskirts of town?" Legend asked, glancing around as the floorboards creaked beneath him.

"I can't teleport us to places we haven't already been," Classic said, narrowing his eyes. "Tell me. Do you *really* want to walk all that way?"

"Couldn't we just fly there?"

"I'm out of flight orbs."

"Huh?" Legend paused, blinking at his brother. "'Flight orb?' What's a 'flight orb?'"

Classic froze, eyes wide as he realized what he'd let slip. He quickly turned around and gave a rather unconvincing toothy grin. "Uh, nothing!"

Legend narrowed his eyes. He may not have been the best when it came to social interaction, but even *he* could tell his brother was trying to hide something. Walking closer, he tilted his head. "Can you not fly under your own power?"

"Wh-what!?" Classic stammered, diverting his eyes. "O-of course I can! What dragon *can't* at this age?"

Legend blinked as Classic chuckled nervously. Shaking his head, he narrowed his eyes. "Then what's with this whole 'flight orb' thing?"

"Oh, uh... It..." Classic stuttered, looking upwards nervously as he cleared his throat. "It...it makes dragons fly quicker! Yeah, that's it!"

Legend said nothing and merely glared at his counterpart, utterly unconvinced. Sighing, he softened his expression.

"Hey, there's nothing embarrassing about not being able to fly under your own power," he said. "Our worlds *are* wildly different, so if dragons around your age aren't able to fly in your world, that shouldn't be embarrassing. I can even teach you how to—"

"I can fly, dangit! Okay!? I can fly! I can fly! I can *fly!* What's with the third degree!?" Classic finally snapped, baring his teeth as he narrowed his eyes.

At this, Legend growled. If trying to play nice to get his brother to admit it wasn't working, he would have to get tough.

"Alright, then, prove it!" Legend said, narrowing his eyes as he got closer to Classic. "If you can fly, why not do it right now!?"

Classic stepped back as Legend got up in his face. Scowling, he scratched the back of his neck as beads of sweat began forming on

his forehead. "W-well, I *would* , but this place *is* rather cramped..."

"So? There's a window right over there," Legend said, motioning to a busted wall that led to one of the many rooms of the apartment.

"Uh-uh, well..."

Legend smirked as Classic glanced away. Considering this had worked well the last time...

"Of course, if you're feeling reluctant, I can always give you a little push ... " Legend said, raising his head as a mischievous glint appeared in his eyes.

Classic gulped, then growled and finally let out a sigh of defeat. "Alright! Fine! I can't fly! You happy!?"

Legend gave a cheeky smile. "See? Was that *so* hard?"

Classic scowled, letting out a low growl. "Aren't you supposed to be the serious one?"

"Hey, you're the one who's trying to get me to lighten up."

Classic's expression went flat as Legend chuckled. Shaking his head, Legend looked at Classic with a grin. "Tell you what. In exchange for teaching me how to teleport, I'll teach you how to fly. Fair trade?"

Classic narrowed his eyes, though he quickly shook his head. "Fine," he said in a defeated voice.

Legend smirked. Classic turned around and they continued to walk through the apartment, looking for a suitable training area. Legend made sure to keep his steps light as he glanced around, and narrowed his eyes at a leaking pipe that had left a large stain on the floor.

"I'm surprised that this place hasn't fallen apart already," he muttered, jumping over another puddle on the ground.

"I'm surprised no one's torn it down yet," Classic said, taking care to sidestep some loose nails on the floor. "You'd think this place would be condemned by now. Eh, I suppose one dragon's trash is another dragon's dojo."

Legend rolled his eyes at the odd saying, hovering in the air slightly as he flew over the nails. Classic glared at this display, but was quick to shake it off. Legend landed on the floor and was about to continue following his brother, but suddenly paused. Classic glanced back at him with a raised eyebrow.

"You com—?"

" *Shhh,* " Legend hissed, looking up at the area above. Narrowing his eyes, he tensed up. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" Classic asked, glancing up at what his brother was looking at.

"I could have sworn I heard a voice a few seconds ago..." Legend muttered, looking back down at him.

"Bleh, you're probably just hearing things," Classic said, turning around and beginning to walk down the hallway.

Legend narrowed his eyes as he caught up to his brother. "Seriously. I swear I heard a voice a few seconds ago."

Classic shook his head, but paused and glanced upward. He smirked. It was time to have a little fun.

"Weeeell," he said, trying to hide his smirk as he glanced over his shoulder at Legend. "I wasn't going to tell you this, but..."

Legend raised an eyebrow. "But?"

"It's just a silly rumor, but from what I've heard, this apartment is supposed to be haunted," Classic said, a devious glint in his eyes.

"Haunted?"

Classic frowned at Legend's unimpressed expression. Shaking his head, he glanced up.

"Yep, haunted," he said, undeterred by his brother's lack of reaction. "From what I heard, once upon a time a powerful sorcerer lived here. He was very power-mad and had delusions of taking over the entire Dragon Realms. One night, the sorcerer stumbled upon a powerful spell: a spell that would allow him to summon and control a powerful being from another dimension."

"Okay..." Legend said, placing a claw to his chin. "I think I see where this is going. Why would he perform the spell here of all places, though?"

"Well, there are several explanations. Some say he was poor, others say he wasn't the brightest bulb in the shed, or maybe he was just plain lazy," Classic said, nonchalantly waving his paw. "If you ask me, though, it's probably for the same reason we're here: so nobody would find out about him practicing this spell."

"Alright..."

Classic tried his best not to frown at Legend's unchanging expression. He didn't care how long it took, he'd spook his brother yet.

"Anyways, as I was saying, one night he had managed to get all the ingredients to his spell and was ready to start the ritual. All was going well at first, but the sorcerer greatly overestimated his power," Classic continued, trying his best to emulate a mysterious voice. "Because he didn't have enough power to fully control the ritual, the spell ended up rebounding out of control, tearing his physical form

apart and causing the apartment to fall into the state of disrepair it's in now."

Classic got up on his hind legs, raising his forelegs up as he slowly turned around.

"Some say the sorcerer's soul is now trapped in a state of undying, unable to cross over and forever bound to this apartment for his power lust," he finished, turning back to Legend and falling to four paws.

Legend blinked, tilting his head as he glanced around. "We probably shouldn't be here, then."

Classic smirked. "What's the matter? *Scared* ?" he asked in a slightly condescending voice.

"Not really," Legend said nonchalantly. "My mentor told me that you should always respect spirits, though. You shouldn't go disturbing their resting place, even if unintentionally."

Classic's expression went flat. What was with his brother's nerves of steel? Sighing in defeat, he shook his head.

"Whatever, it's just a silly urban legend, anyways. I doubt it's actually true," he said, turning around and continuing on. "C'mon. I think I see a pretty good spot where we can practice up ahead."

Legend watched as Classic headed down the hallway. He was quick to follow, when a sudden popping sound came from above. Legend looked up cautiously before glancing down. Closing his eyes, he raised his paw to his chest. *'May the ancestors have pity on this poor soul.'*

With that prayer said, Legend was quick to catch up to Classic.

The air had an unprecedented thickness to it as Classic entered the next room. It hardly qualified as a 'room,' as the walls separating it

from two other rooms had been knocked down. Classic brought up his command line, activating the telekinesis spell to move any dangerous debris out of the way. Walking to the far end of the room, Classic saw Legend walk through the door.

"Over here!" he called, waving his paw in the air.

Legend was quick to head his way. Raising an eyebrow, he stopped next to his brother. "Why are you all the way over here?"

"Remember what I said? You need to have been to the location in order to teleport to it," Classic explained, looking towards the far side of the room. Looking back at his brother, he smirked. "Alright, let's get started. First off, have you ever actually used magic before?"

Legend paused, placing a claw to his chin. "I'm...I'm not sure, to be honest. I *guess* Dragon Time might count, considering how you managed to copy it during that...uh... *incident.* " Both of them flinched slightly. "But it doesn't really feel any different from my other elements, so..."

Classic placed his claw to his chin. If that was the case, it could be possible that his magic had just been replicating the time element, like how it could replicate the ice and electricity elements. He shook his head.

"Alright then. It might be best we start from scratch here," Classic said, placing his paw on the ground. "For starters, can you sense any magical power within you at the moment?"

Legend paused, taking a deep breath as he focused. He could feel his usual assortment of elements within him—fire, ice, electricity and earth—but for the most part, outside of odd things like Dragon Time and what little he had learned of Convexity so far, those were all he felt. Legend frowned.

"Exactly what am I supposed to be looking for?" he asked, his eyes still closed. "I mean, does magic feel any different from the

elements?"

"Well...kind of. It's kind of like... Well, sort of like..." Classic paused, placing his claw to his chin. "It's difficult to explain. It's one of those things you can just feel."

Several more seconds passed and Legend stood in complete concentration. Finally, he sighed.

"I'm not getting anything," he said flatly, his eyes still closed. "Maybe I just don't have any magical abilities..."

"You *should* have some," Classic said, tilting his head. "Even if you don't have the massive reserves of magic that the purple dragons of my world have, you should still have some magic in you. Dragons in general have an affinity towards magic."

Several more seconds passed before Classic's eyes went wide. "I've got an idea!" he exclaimed, bringing up his command line. "I can't believe I forgot about this."

Legend opened one of his eyes. "...What are you doing?"

"It's simple," Classic said, scrolling through the transparent terminal. "I'm going to use my magic to jumpstart your magic!"

"Huh?"

"Don't worry, it's completely safe," Classic said, looking at Legend. "The elders do it all the time in my world for those just starting out."

"I don't know..." Legend said, a slight frown on his face.

"Just trust me, will ya? I know what I'm doing," Classic said, focusing back on his command line.

Though the frown on his face said it all, Legend reclosed his eyes and began focusing again. Classic began mentally writing things into his command line. He smirked as he looked at Legend.

"Now, you may feel a *slight* stinging sensation..."

"What!?"

"Kidding, kidding!"

Legend scowled, letting out a low growl as Classic chuckled. Sighing, he began to focus once again. Nothing seemed too different. His elements were still there as usual, and that was about it. If he hadn't been so deeply focused, he would have raised an eyebrow. Then he felt something odd: a growing energy starting to make itself known. It was incredibly faint, especially in comparison to the power his elements had built up in the loops, yet, at the same time, it felt completely different. Legend opened his eyes, glancing down at himself.

"Well? Can you sense your magic now?" Classic asked, looking up from his command line.

"I...I think so," Legend said, looking at his brother.

Classic smirked, closing his command line as he dusted off his paws. "Alright, then! Time to get to work."

He walked in front of Legend, his head held high as he grinned. "Okay, first thing you need to know about magic is it's a lot like using an element. You need to focus it before anything else, like you need to do for breathing fire. However, with magic, besides some rare exceptions, you almost always need a focal point."

At this, Classic brought up his command line with a smirk. "For example, despite looking like it's made from magic, my command line acts as a focal point. Specifically, it actually turns my eyes into a focal point, allowing me to run spells simply by typing them out. It also has the benefit of allowing me to use it without anyone realizing, as you already know."

At this, Classic ran the pigment spell, changing his scale color to a bright red. Smirking at his brother's wide eyes and dropped jaw, he ran the spell again to dye his scales back to their correct hue.

"However, it's pretty complicated to get the hang of. There *is* a quicker solution for basic spells like teleportation, but..." Classic paused, glancing up from his command line with a frown. "Listen, are you absolutely *sur e* you don't want to learn how to use a magic command line? Magical calligraphy is a massive pain. It's just... *ugh* , I can't even describe how finicky it is." He gave an exasperated sigh.

All it took was one glance at the odd combination of letters and symbols on Classic's command prompt for Legend's eyes to go wide. Shaking his head, he looked at Classic. "I would at least like to attempt it first."

"Eh, your funeral," Classic said, closing his command line before looking down the hallway.

"Anyways, now that you can access it, it's time to use it. Magical calligraphy mostly focuses on using your tail to draw runes as a focal point for magic, as opposed to writing it in a command line," he said, readying his tail. "For teleportation, you need to draw a triangle."

With that said, Classic swished his tail in the air in a triangular motion, a blue glowing line followed behind. The lines joined together to form a triangle in the air... and it promptly fizzled out of existence not a second later. Legend blinked. Classic's expression went flat as he narrowed his eyes.

"Now, if the rune would just register correctly..." he said, making another motion to form another glowing triangle.

Once again, the rune quickly fizzled out of existence.

"I *said,* if the rune would registered *correctly* ..." Classic said, groaning as he tried again.

Once again, as if to mock him, the rune failed to register.

"I SAID...!" Classic forced out through his teeth, his left eye beginning to twitch. Finally he let out a sigh and lowered his head before turning to Legend. "Are you really, *really* sure you don't want to learn the command line?"

"Maybe we should just skip the rune part for now?" Legend suggested, stepping forward. "Is there anything specific about casting the spell I need to know?"

Classic shook his head, leaning up against a wall to compose himself as he held his paw over his eyes. "Well, you need to have a good idea of where you want to teleport. You have to be able to visualize it vividly. That's the main reason why you can't teleport to places you haven't already been to."

"Uh huh," Legend said, a paw on his chin as he raised his tail up. "Anything else?" he asked, his tail beginning to glow a faint blue.

"None that I can really think of," Classic said, taking a deep breath. "Unless you count extreme patience and ability to tolerate frustration." Classic shook his head, getting back on all fours. "Listen, learning the command line actually isn't *so* hard once you get the basics. I should be able to teach you it before the loop—"

Classic was interrupted by a bright flash of light that filled the room. He shook his head, trying to shake off the flashing dots in his vision as his eyes began to refocus. When he realized what happened, his jaw dropped and his eyes went wide. Legend was on the far side of the room, struggling to keep his balance as his eyes rolled in his head. Shaking his head, he sat down.

Classic was quick to dart over to him. He opened his mouth, but words escaped him and he stood frozen in place. Finally, he said the one word on his mind. "H-how!?"

Legend grabbed his head in an attempt to make the spinning stop. "I'm...I'm not entirely sure..." He glanced at his brother from the corner of his eye.

Classic's expression was blank. After multiple early loops before he'd learned the command line, and even when he'd attempted to demonstrate, he could never get those horrid runes to work reliably. Yet here his counterpart was, managing to pull it off on his first try. Despite trying everything he could to rationalize it, Classic's mind drew a blank over how this was possible. Finally, he was knocked out of his train of thought by the look on Legend's face.

"Uh... Is it natural to feel like you want to throw up after teleporting?"

Classic sighed, lowering his head. "Don't worry, you'll get used to it."

Legend took a deep breath and held his head. Classic opened his mouth to say something, but just as he was about to, a low moan echoed throughout the apartment. Classic jumped, raising his head and looking around with wide eyes. Legend glanced upwards before looking at his brother.

"We should probably go now. I think the spirit is started to get upset with our presence," Legend said, getting up and starting towards the hallway.

Classic shook his head. *'Come on. There's probably a rational explanation for that. There's no such thing as—'*

A loud popping noise echoed behind Classic and he jumped. He looked back, but saw nothing there. The moaning starting up once again and Classic gulped. Now starting to shiver slightly, he was quick to dart after his brother.

"Yo! Hey, wait up!" he called, running on all fours as fast as his paws would carry him.

Ripto groaned, having fallen out of bed straight onto his face. Yet another futile sleepless night on what could only barely qualify as a bed. Picking himself up, he shook his head. Wobbling slightly, he made his way over to the table and grabbed the scroll.

'Alright,' he thought, shaking his head. *'Enough is enough. Time to put this plan into action.'*

It had been several days since the apartment trip, and Legend, Classic, Cynder and Ember were sitting on the grass in the sisters' backyard. Their mother had left for grocery shopping about fifteen minutes ago. The four were under strict orders to not leave the yard until she got back, even though in-loop Legend and Cynder had more training in defending themselves.

Earlier, Legend had gotten Classic to help Ember personally, basically saying, "If you want me to tell you everything, I need to talk with Cynder privately first. So please, you and Ember go be busy somewhere else."

So, even though she wasn't supposed to practice fighting if she wanted to join the dojo, Classic had run Ember through some basics of Dragon Kata while Legend and Cynder went off to the other side of the yard. Five minutes later, they had regrouped, Legend giving Classic a slight nod as they did so.

So now, ten minutes later, Classic and Ember watched as Legend and Cynder shared a glance before Legend hesitatingly began.

"As I'm sure you've realized, Cynder and I have both been holding something back about our baseline. We've agreed that you deserve to know." Legend took a deep breath. "In our home loop, when we were still eggs, the forces of Malefor attacked the temple where all the eggs had been gathered in one place. I think Cynder already told you about that part, Ember."

Getting a nod from her, Legend continued. "The Guardians fought to keep them out but...it was ultimately no use. The apes devastated the temple... Only two eggs survived that terrible night. Ignitus had taken my own egg early in the attack and sent it down the river, where it would eventually be found by my parents."

Cynder picked up immediately after he trailed off, her voice clear, though her eyes were closed. "The other was mine. When the apes found that Spyro's egg had been spirited away, they took one of the few still intact eggs to further their Dark Master's plans."

Classic wanted to make a crack at how generic that title sounded but kept silent. This wasn't the time.

"Now, Ember... Remember how I told you about that ritual they needed me for?" Cynder asked, glancing over to Ember. Getting a nod from her, Cynder took a deep breath. "Well, it's time I explained the details behind it..."

Several moments passed as Cynder sat silently, eyes closed as she took a few short breaths. Giving a sigh, she opened her eyes, trying her best to look at her audience.

"I was raised in cruelty and eventually a vile ritual was enacted upon me, artificially aging my body to that of an adult and trapping my mind. I became the general of Malefor's forces; Cynder, the Terror of the Skies." She turned her head away, but continued to speak clearly. "It was only thanks to Spyro—my Spyro, Legend—that I was saved. Some time after that, I felt a desire to flee from the Dragon Temple; whether by my own feelings, a manipulation by Malefor, or a combination of both, I don't know."

"Spyro chased after me. He went all the way to the Mountain of Malefor, the Well of Souls, to help me. During that time, he was exposed to the Well's power and had his dark form forced upon him. When he pulled his darkness off himself, the mountain began to collapse and he used his power in a way that we had never seen before, encasing himself, Sparx and me in crystal, saving our lives."

Now Legend took up the tale again. "We were found and released three years later by Malefor's forces. Even now I cannot comprehend why he had us captured rather than killed. When we awoke, it was to a war-torn world whose last hope was sputtering and dying as it was thrust into our claws."

The four dragons sat for a short time, an awkward silence between them. Eventually, Ember directed a question at Cynder. "So, when you said your element was complicated...?" She trailed off.

Cynder, however, recognized what she was talking about. "The ritual changed something within me. I don't know what element I originally had, but I don't think I have access to it now. Instead, it grafted four more...unusual elements onto me: poison, fear, shadow and wind."

Classic perked up as the information clicked with a memory, and spoke before he realized what he was saying. "So that thing you did during..." He began to laugh awkwardly, realizing his mistake a bit too late.

"That was one of the uses of my shadow element," Cynder replied calmly. "I can travel within my own shadow, allowing me to access places that many cannot. I have never tried taking another with me, however. I can also attack within my shadow or use it to breathe a black flame, which will not only burn but also suffocate my enemies."

"That's so cool!" Classic blurted out before his mind caught up to his mouth again. He quickly cleared his throat, scratching the back of his neck as he glanced away. "Not how you got it, I mean... I wouldn't wish that on anyone."

Cynder gaped at Classic's open praise before jerkily turning to Ember.

The pink dragoness was much more reserved, her expression neutral as she sat silently for a few seconds. Finally, she spoke up. "I don't like that you didn't tell me the whole story right away," she began, a slight frown on her face. "But I realize that I *can't*

understand just how painful this must be for you. Thank you for trusting me with this."

Cynder's face bloomed into a full smile. "No, thank you both for accepting me."

Legend broke into a full grin before rising to his paws. "Yes, thank you both. I cannot express enough just what this means to the both of us."

The passengers did their best to avoid the imposing yet minute figure that sat at the very end of the transit car, bright orange scales all that were visible under his ragged hood. Out the window, stars and nebulae rushed by and stationery asteroids supported the current of magic that guided the vehicle. Without warning, the cloaked figure suddenly disappeared, leading some of the other riders to believe that he was some sort of intangible being; a bad omen.

In reality, he'd silently opened a hatch at the top of the vehicle and, just as quietly, resealed it again to avoid alarm at his disappearance. After bounding off the metal chain of capsules, Ripto landed on one of the anchored rocks and promptly opened the scroll that contained the key to his imminent dominion over dragon society.

"Soon, Ripto, soon," he mused to himself.

It would take a few days to find and comb the area of asteroids that the scroll specified, but it would all be worth it. Besides, he preferred sleeping under the stars, anyway.

From his tattered robe he pulled a wand and held it out like a metal detector. The treasure he searched for would not only grant him immunity and riches, but it would allow him at long last to rename the Dragon Realms 'Riptonia.'

The group of four dragons were at the far side of the city, away from their parent's houses. Legend had checked his loop memories and from them he had figured out that his in-loop self knew how to fly, though his parents weren't exactly ecstatic about the idea because of how young he was. This meant it wouldn't be *too* weird to see him flying around, which meant he didn't need to worry about hiding it from others. He smiled. It was time to repay Classic for teaching him how to teleport.

"Okay, first thing you need to know about flying is that, like elements, a good part of it is spiritual," Legend began, unfolding his wings. "Though wing strength plays a part in how fast you can fly, it's not entirely required to fly in and of itself."

Classic smirked. With how much time he spent at the speedways, his wing strength must have been huge. He could only imagine the look on everyone's faces when he became the realm's first supersonic dragon.

Ember placed a claw to her chin. "So, does that mean we have to channel it like with how we breathe fire?"

"Not entirely," Cynder cut in. "The first time, yes. After you manage it the first time, though, you won't have to do it again. Flying will become second nature after that."

Classic smirked. "Well then, what are we waiting for?"

Legend huffed, raising a claw. "Alright, first off, I want you both to close your eyes."

Both young dragons did so. Classic had a frown on his face. "Exactly how's this going to help us fly?"

"As I said, flying is just as much spiritual as it is physical. Before anything else, we need to tap into the spiritual side," Legend said, sitting down. "Now then, I want you both to empty your minds. Let the world fade out around you..."

Classic fidgeted. He wasn't exactly known for sitting still, nor was he entirely happy about the idea. However, being able to fly without the use of an orb or power-up... Classic sighed, sitting still and keeping his eyes closed. Several moments passed and all he saw was the darkness behind his eyelids. Despite this, he could still feel the grass under him and sense the presence of the three other dragons around him. He frowned.

"Exactly how do I know if I've 'tuned the world out'?" he asked, keeping his eyes closed.

"It'll be like you're in a completely blank void, unaware of surroundings, as you are the only being in it," Legend said.

Classic sighed, his eyes still closed. "It's not working, then."

Legend placed a paw to his chin. "Kind of figured this would be a problem..." he muttered before shaking his head. "Hmm... How about trying to imagine yourself doing something you enjoy first? Nothing too exciting to rile you up, but enough to help you tune out the world around you."

Classic took a deep breath. Something he liked to do that wouldn't rile him up. Skateboarding was out, as well as pulling pranks. He scoured his mind, trying to come up with something to help him focus.

'Well, considering this is what we're learning...'

Classic opened his mind's eye and was instantly met with blue skies. The ground was far below him and the green landscape stretched as far as the eye could see. He smirked, diving down towards the water. The speedways were always one of his favorite pastimes in the loops. Heck, even before the loops had started they had been one of his favorite things. Flying was a great way to clear his mind or just to have fun.

In his mindscape, he let one of his wings brush up against the water, leaving tiny streaking waves in its wake. He grinned, pulling up and heading towards the mountains. He swore he could almost hear someone trying to talk to him, but he tuned it out. Flying through one of the holes in the mountain, he zoomed dangerously close to rocks, stalactites and stalagmites. He smirked as he rocketed out from one of the holes and into the sky.

He could have sworn he heard a voice again, this time a bit more agitated than before, but it didn't matter. He was flying; any troubles he had were miles below on the ground.

Classic grinned as he flew higher and higher. He heard a faint groan, but brushed it off. Right now he was on a mission: a mission to see how high he could fly before he'd have to pull a dive. It almost felt like someone was starting to move towards him. He shook it off, flying higher and higher, pushing his limits. Suddenly, he felt the presence recoil and he felt lighter than air.

"Spyro! Open your eyes!"

Classic slowly did so, returning to the real world. He blinked. In front of him was his brother, his eyes wide and mouth agape as one paw hung in the air. Cynder was close by, eyes wide but managing to keep her composure a bit better than Legend. He looked to his side to see Ember looking up in awe.

'...Wait, did everyone suddenly get shorter?'

It was only then that Classic looked directly down. His paws were several inches above the ground. He glanced back and saw his wings flapping up and down.

When his mind finally connected to his actions, Classic quickly fell to the ground with a thud.

Legend could only blink as Classic picked himself up. He hadn't even really gotten to the main meat of learning to fly and *already*

Classic had managed to achieve it for a few brief seconds. Legend attempted to say something, *anything* , to rationalize how Classic could have done this, but words continued to fail him.

Classic, meanwhile, was more than willing to pick up the slack as he picked himself up with a huge grin.

"Yes!" he exclaimed, starting to bounce up and down. "I flew! I actually flew without a power-up! YES!"

He quickly stopped, though, when he noticed the group around him. Legend's brain was still broken over trying to understand how this was possible, Cynder merely blinked, and Ember just giggled. Classic cleared his throat, scratching the back of his neck as he grinned sheepishly.

"Uh, I mean..." he said, a luminescent blush on his face. "Thanks for helping me with this, bro. It means a lot."

Legend paused before he finally hung his head and sighed. Somehow, Classic had figured out how to fly with barely any advice on how to tap into the spiritual side of it. "...You're welcome."

Despite his attempt to sound sincere, the confusion was readily apparent in his voice. He had said it before and he would say it again: he would never understand his counterpart, be it how he acts or how he manages to do the things that he does.

Legend sighed, looking out the window as he finished his last book for the seventh time in a row. It had been a few days since he had taught Classic and Ember to fly. It was also a bright and shining day outside, and yet...

He rolled onto his back, groaning as he let his legs hang over the edge of the bed.

'But if your loop sucked that badly and you were presented with the opportunity to have some fun for once, why aren't you taking it?'

Classic's words rang true in his head. By all accounts he *should* have been having fun right now. All he'd done so far when he'd gone out was do errands for his mother or learn some new skill, like teleportation. He hadn't once gone out to have fun, to just explore or enjoy the day and the peaceful surroundings. And yet...

Legend shook his head, getting up and looking out the window for the fifth time in the last few hours. He watched as several younger dragons passed by, laughing as they ran in the sun, and looked up to see buildings as far as the eye could see. Some were small, and others nearly reached the sky. There wasn't a cloud in sight and the sun shone brightly. More importantly, there were no armies marching to battle, no soldiers ready to take up arms at a moment's notice, and no devastation that spoke of a land torn apart by war.

Of course there wasn't; there was no war in this world.

Legend sighed, looking down. *'I'm glad things are peaceful for a change, but...'* He glanced back up, looking at the scenery with glazed eyes. *'The more I realize how much freedom I have...the more I realize I'm not exactly sure what to* do *with this newfound freedom.'*

Legend took a deep breath before lying back down on the bed. He rolled over, picking up his assortment of books in the hope of finding something he hadn't already read ten times over.

"Read it...read it...read it..." he muttered as he picked them up and placed them down.

As he continued to ramble to himself, unaware, the door to his room creaked open. Flash poked his head in to see his son looking through his books with a dull expression. He wasn't entirely sure what had gotten Spyro into reading, but he had become quite interested in it. Normal literature, comic books, 'manga'—which, from

what he understood, was more or less comic books made by the Magic Crafters—his son had quickly built up quite the collection...and taken a lot out of Flash's wallet in the process.

So, when Flash saw his son looking dully through his accumulation of books, the wide-eyed horror on his face was understandable. He needed to do something quick before whatever was left in his wallet was gone.

"Hey, son," Flash said, entering the room with a wide—if somewhat phony—grin. "What are you up to?"

Legend raised his head and blinked. *'No matter how many times I see my parents this loop, I'll never get used to seeing them as dragons.'* Pushing that thought to the back of his mind, he smiled. "Not much. Mostly I'm just passing time."

Flash gave a more genuine smile, sitting down next to Legend's bed. A few awkward seconds passed before Flash cleared his throat. "So..."

"So..." Legend returned, glancing up at him.

Flash glanced away, scratching the back of his head. "It's a pretty nice day. Why not go out and enjoy it?"

"Even if I wanted to, I can't right now," Legend said, looking down at his books. "My brother's helping mom with the chores and I'm not allowed to leave the house without him. Even then..." Legend paused, sighing as he closed his eyes. "I'm not sure *what* to do..."

Flashed looked back down, giving another smile. "There's always catch. I'm sure your mother wouldn't object to you going out if I was with you. We wouldn't even have to leave the yard."

Legend paused to check his in-loop memories. 'Catch' was a game where two people would toss a ball back and forth. It seemed like it

would be a good way to pass time, but then his memories told him it required the opposable claw.

"Eh... that's alright. I don't think we even have a ball to toss around, anyway," Legend said, going back to shuffling his books.

Flash expression drooped but nonetheless he was undeterred. "Okay then... How about TV?"

"I can't really find anything I particularly like on it, to be honest."

Flash glanced away. *'Right. There's never anything good on TV.'*

He paused before looking down again at Legend. "You can always try something your brother finds fun. What about skateboarding?"

Legend shuddered, shaking his head. "Uh...I kind of did try that..."

Flash raised an eyebrow. "And?"

Legend put his books down. "I mean no disrespect. I know you're trying to help, but..." He turned to look at his father with a stern expression. " *Never. Again.* "

Flash said nothing as Legend turned back to his books. He looked forward, placing a claw on his chin before glancing at Legend's books again. Suddenly, his eyes went wide and he grinned.

"I have an idea!" he said. Seeing Legend glance at him from the corner of his eye, Flash cleared his throat as he took a more dignified stance. "I couldn't help but noticed you've recently gotten into reading."

As Legend turned to him with a curious expression, Flash smiled. "As you know, I am an editor. Why don't you come and see some of the stuff I work on?"

Legend paused, seeing the smile on his father's face. He blinked. He hadn't realized what his father did during the loop, but he had to

admit he was slightly intrigued. He smiled. "Alright."

Flash grinned, getting up as he walked towards the door. "Alright then. Follow me."

Legend blinked at the stack of papers on the desk. Flash smiled as he walked over to it, placing his paw on top of the stack.

"As an editor, I mostly proofread other's works to make sure they're ready for print. I mainly work on newspapers, but occasionally I like to write my own works," he said, taking one of the papers and handing it to Legend. "It keeps me sharp when it comes to looking for mistakes in any work and helps me figure out things that I myself still need improvement on. Mostly I write prose and poetry, but occasionally I like to do short stories, too."

Legend look at the paper with wide eyes. " *For Just a While* ..." he read, looking at the title.

"Ah, yes. Just something simple I wrote based on the daily life of a dragon. On the little pleasures and annoyances, that sort of thing," Flash explained, taking a prideful stance.

Curious, Legend hopped up on the chair, taking another paper out of the stack. " *Ode to the Sun* ..."

"Yeah. That one was a simple poem I wrote about summer. It's always my favorite season. Could never really stand the cold," Flash said, looking out the window at the bright sunny day with a smile.

Legend smiled, placing the paper down neatly and taking another from the stack. When he saw the title, though, he narrowed his eyes. " *A Gentle Night with a Rough Dra* —"

"Uh, that one is *not* for your eyes, son!" Flash said, quickly taking the paper out of Legend's paws and crumpling it into a ball.

Legend blinked as Flash threw the paper in the trash, giving a rather phony smile as he did so. Clearing his throat, Flash shook his head before regaining his composure.

"So? What do you think?" he asked, making sure to put himself in front of the trash can.

Legend blinked, but he was quick to smile as he looked back down at the stack of papers. "It's really interesting. I had no idea you were a writer."

"Dabbler in writing, technically," Flash said, walking up to his son. "As said, I'm mostly an editor. Writing personal works is a nice pastime of mine. It's a really good way to relax after a stressful day."

Legend's smile grew wider as he continued looking through the papers. "These are all really good. Wish I could write like this..."

"Why not give it a try, then?"

Legend raised his head, looking at his father with wide eyes. He glanced down, scratching the back of his neck. "I don't know. I never really thought about it before..."

"You'll be great," Flash said, smirking as he held his paw to his chest. "After all, you *do* have my blood in your veins."

'Right. Biological son this loop,' Legend thought before a smile appeared on his face. "Okay, then."

Flash smiled, pulling out the drawer to the desk and retrieving an ink and quill.

Realizing these tools would require use of the opposable claw, Legend shivered. *'Wait, if writing requires an opposable claw, how* do *dragons of my world write scrolls in the first place...?'*

Pushing that thought aside, he looked up with slight apprehension. "Uh, I don't suppose you have any other means of writing, do you?"

Flash paused, placing the ink and quill down and putting a paw to his chin. "Well...we do still have the old typewriter. It was mostly intended to be an antique, though."

A typewriter. *Finally* a piece of technology Legend understood. "Um, if it's alright... I'd like to use that, if it's okay."

Flash paused, glancing over to the shelf he had it on. Though he looked a bit apprehensive at first, seeing his son's wide eyes made him smile. "Alright. Just *please* be careful with it."

Legend smiled as Flash got the typewriter down from the shelf and handed it to him. Carefully holding it in one paw, Legend grinned.

"Thanks, Dad!" he said before carefully making his way out of the room.

Flash grinned. *'I guess the old saying is true. Like father, like son,'* he thought with a chuckle.

A few seconds passed before Flash made a quick check of the room. Making sure no one was watching, he reached into the trashcan and unfolded the scrunched piece of paper. Once again checking to be sure no one was watching, he put the piece of paper in the drawer with a lock on it, then sighed as he wiped the sweat off his forehead.

Ember twiddled her claws, anxious of what was to come. It had been some time since they had agreed to this and Ember knew that, at some point, she and Classic had to get over their 'break-up,' if that was the right term, and learn to be friends. Rolling to her side on the sofa, she saw her mother talking on the phone once again. It was most likely a call from her 'father,' a dragon who hadn't been home ever since the loop had started. Apparently he was an agent who had to be in many places at once, and it just wasn't feasible for him to be at home for more than a few days at a time.

Unfortunately, the last time their father had been home had been during their wedding anniversary, a week before the start of the loop. Cynder didn't really have an opinion on this, considering her lack of background on the subject of parenting and childcare, but Ember wondered how her mother and father managed to raise two children in this situation.

Knocks resounded from the door and Edna beckoned her daughter to check the window to see who it was. There stood Classic, glancing around nervously as he fidgeted in place. Before he could turn tail and go home, the door opened and Ember smiled as best as she could.

"Spyro, how...nice to see you." Of course, it had to get awkward at the first sentence.

"Hey, um..."

"So, the arcade?"

"Yeah, that. I have money; it's okay if you don't bring any." Already, Classic mentally smacked himself for insinuating that Ember was broke. It wasn't highly recommended to imply that someone was bankrupt, especially when trying to make friends.

"No, it's fine, I already have some. Just let me tell my mom that I'm going, she might want Cynder to come along."

With that, Ember returned to her mother, who was still recounting the past events to her spouse. "It's true, Nina's twins were back on their feet after three days. Three days, Zant!"

Something tugged at Edna's leg and she looked down to see Ember pointing towards Classic in the doorway. She gave her daughter permission to go with a heavy sigh. Cynder had said that she was proficient in self-defence by now. It just killed her that Zantor simply didn't have the time to be present in their children's lives because of

his constant business trips to the Magic Crafter Realm. He just had to be an engineer for the portal transit, didn't he?

Walking back to the front porch, Ember closed the front door and attempted to start small talk. "So...yeah. Nice weather."

"Yep," was Classic's feeble reply.

It was nearly impossible to cut through the uncomfortable tension between the purple dragon and the pink dragoness. Classic knew they would have to clear the air eventually, but that didn't make this any easier. At least his brother wasn't there to poke fun at him, as Flash had convinced Nina to finally let him go out on his own. Though, he could have done without the winking Legend had given him when he'd mentioned he was going to try to spend some time with Ember.

It was only when the cashier raised his voice that Classic finally snapped out of his awkward stupor. "Kid! For the fifth time, how many tokens do you want?!"

At this, Classic gasped and tried to save face. "Uh, how much does this get me?" he said as he held out a red gem.

The cashier moaned, held his head in one paw, and grudgingly pointed his claw at the sign behind him. One gem, four tokens; it sounded reasonable enough. Classic pitched in a few gems along with the ones that Ember brought and they were granted entrance, leaving the adolescent employee to grumble about stupid kids wasting his time. Once they entered the main hall, they were met with a bombardment of miscellaneous sound effects and music accompanied with neon lighting. Standard fare, so far.

Ember looked on at the scene before her and her expression went flat. "You know, games are fine and all, but I'm not one for something this, well..."

"Noisy?" finished Classic with a half-hearted grin.

"I guess."

"Well, we already bought their stuff, so we might as well try this place out." Out of the corner of his eye, Classic noticed a game that didn't look too difficult—as to not alienate Ember, of course. "Hey, how about some skeeball?"

Following his gaze, Ember witnessed what appeared to be a cross between bowling and...archery? It looked unassuming enough, just very strange. "Alright, let's try it."

Once the two dragons stood in front of the miniature alley, Classic inserted a few of his tokens and a collection of balls were released into the dispenser. Plucking one from the queue, he walked forward and swung his arm, releasing the ball at the bottom of the arc. It fell into one of the inner rings, a possible score.

"And that's how you do it." With that, he handed a ball to Ember, expecting her to follow suit.

It looked simple enough; the kids at the nursery always came up with these kinds of games and going through numerous loops had given Ember confidence that she wouldn't fail utterly. Eyeing her trajectory, she got into a suitable position and rolled the ball right down the middle of the alley. Forced into the air by the ramp, it soared in a straight arc and neatly fell into the bullseye.

With a bright smile, she looked back at her companion. "And that's how I do it."

Classic gawked. Shaking it off, he dismissed it as beginner's luck. "Wow! Nice shot there, but let me show you how a true master does it."

Instead of aiming for the central basket, he had his eye on one of the corner baskets. These required a bit more dexterity than the

bullseye, but they were worth about the same. Tossing the billiard in his paws a few times, he let it barrel down the alley and it flew onto the edge of the top-left basket. It teetered back and forth and, much to Classic's dismay, fell forward instead of back into the basket.

"I think it would have been easier if you just aimed for the target."

Classic's gaze whipped back to Ember, whose expression showed no sign of sarcasm or mockery. She retrieved another billiard and once again scored a bullseye, this time with a slight giggle. This time, Classic knew that Ember thought this subtle competition was amusing.

Rolling his eyes, he quipped, "Ha, ha. Look, we haven't even gotten to the cabinets yet, so don't think you're queen of the arcade now."

A daring glint found its way into Ember's eyes. "I think someone's getting scared. What, afraid a girl could actually beat you at something?"

Knowing exactly what she was getting at, Classic accepted Ember's challenge. "Nope, I'm just saying that you can't think you're all that after just one game. If you want to make it a contest, though, I'm sorry to say that I won't hold back just because you're a girl."

"Or you won't hold back now that you've found out that I don't suck at everything other than being flirty with you."

Classic sputtered after this exposition, much to Ember's enjoyment. "Bu-but that's not true! I've never really hung out with you, is all. Seriously, don't take it that way."

"Aw, come on. I'm not made of glass, so I won't fall apart if that's how you actually felt. To be honest, it's my fault for leading you to believe that and I intend to fix it." Ember's expression softened as she said this.

Classic looked down in embarrassment. She was spot-on concerning his previous views about her. It was just so strange to talk with her without having to think of a way to escape.

"Tell you what, if you feel that guilty, you can let me pick out the next game." Then she stood straighter and warned, "But don't you dare let me win. It's so much funnier when you don't expect it."

Glancing back up, Classic recovered a competitive grin. "Fine. So we'll duke it out 'til we run out of tokens. Winner takes all tickets?"

Shaking Classic's paw, Ember agreed. "Now you're talking!"

Shots were firing from both ships. One was in less than adequate shape, while the other had held on longer than expected, considering that its shields were almost down. A large alien made itself known in the cold void of space and sent its spawn to attack the tiny fighters. Left and right, the relentless army hurtled towards the ships from all sides. One ship managed to vaporize all of its attackers, but the other let one slip by. This was a fatal mistake. The alien charged from behind, reducing the spacecraft to a mass of pixels.

"I guess that's it for me," Ember conceded, swiveling the chair towards her rival.

On the other chair, Classic was actually impressed. "That wasn't bad, actually. If you didn't die there, I would've got destroyed by that huge laser he spits out. So, you know how it goes. Cough 'em up!"

Ember placed her recently earned tickets in Classic's paws, then retorted, "I'll be taking those back next game, thank you very much."

"Yeah, yeah, save it."

Back and forth, the compiled tickets exchanged paws. Paddles clanked against pucks, buttons were mashed, and a small crowd had actually gathered around the combatants, the tension reaching a climax. Finally, two tokens were left and the tickets resided in Classic's grasp. The last attraction was a game called the 'Tower of Power.'

A column of lights pulsed up and down, and the objective was to press the button just as the pillar was at maximum height, but there was a catch. One blink too late and the pillar would 'overflow' and start again at the lowest height. Classic tried his luck first, studying the column as he stood on the podium. A bead of sweat formed on his neck and he decided that he was ready.

The pillar rose once again and Classic slammed the button as quickly as he could, hoping that his timing was correct. The crowd applauded as they saw that he was one light shy of a jackpot, and he smirked at Ember. "Beat that, pinky!"

"I will," was her curt reply.

As Classic had been timing his button press, Ember had also been watching the spectacle. Therefore she wasted no time, her paw a blur as it collided with the button.

A collective silence fell over the watching crowd, and then a loud cheer erupted when tickets began pouring out of the machine. Classic's jaw dropped, the tickets falling out of his claws. "...How?"

"Well, this dragonlet at the day care I work in would always lose the bugs he found in the garden. Needless to say, I'm no slouch when it comes to catching something in a jar," Ember half explained, half boasted as she collected the tickets that were still flowing into her paws.

After the tickets were placed in a bucket, the two dragons made their way to the prize counter and Ember's eyes were on the top shelf.

"My, my, that's a bunch of tickets you got there, little lady! So, what would you like?" the vendor asked.

Her eyes narrowed as she debated what to do with the spoils of her victory, until an idea sprang to mind. "Can I get one of those giant plushies?"

"Sure, what kind?"

"The pink panda, please."

And so, a large stuffed bear found a resting place on Ember's back. Classic couldn't help but snicker at this stereotypical choice of color. "Figures that you would get something pink as a prize."

A sly look crossed Ember's face as she corrected him. "Oh no, Spyro. This panda's for you."

"...What? I thought we weren't going to do anything, you know, weird."

"You think it's a gift? Nope, you're going to carry this all the way back home for me. You know, to the victor goes the spoils," Ember said with a smug look.

However, Classic had no intention of following through with this demand. "And what makes you think I'll agree to that?"

"Oh, I don't know," Ember mused, putting on an innocent expression. "Perhaps it should be a punishment for leaving me in the dark about the loops early on."

Classic moaned in frustration, knowing all too well that she had a very good point. He had a feeling, though, that this argument was not going to be worn out for a very long time. "Fine, hand it over."

"And no subspace pockets."

"Aw, come on!"

A blush blazed on Classic's face as he carried the stuffed animal on his shoulders. He hadn't realized it before, but he now knew the full extent of what Ember had planned for him.

A kindly old dragoness squealed in delight at the sight of him and pinched his cheeks as she said, "Why, you and your girlfriend are the cutest couple I've ever seen!"

Struggling to respond due to the old, wrinkly claws on his face, he could only splutter, "But I'm not her boyfriend! Ember, tell her!"

Instead, Ember just shrugged, put on a reserved smile and kept silent. Ah, revenge was most certainly a dish best served cold.

Ripto's eyes stubbornly refused to open. His lack of sleep was taking a toll. Days had turned to weeks and weeks had turned to what felt like a month. He continued walking, however. It was a completely automatic action at this point, akin to breathing. A loud alarm from his wand caused the fatigued raptor to jump in fright, and, after hyperventilating with his eyes wide and bloodshot, he found a metallic piece of silverware lying on the rock. Namely, a spork.

Ripto snatched the object from the ground, glared at the seemingly faulty wand in his other hand, and bellowed in frustration and fury.

"I toiled and searched for what feels like an eternity...for a *spork* ?! Damn this wand!" he said as he threw the magic artifact to the ground.

"Damn the dragons!" he seethed with indignity and envy.

"...And damn this spork!" he finally panted out, his rage unable to find fuel, due to a lack of food and sleep. With his last reserves of strength, he snapped the silverware in two. Collapsing to the ground, he rolled onto his back, considering the option of letting himself die in Convexity.

Such thoughts were interrupted when a chilling voice pierced the air. "Thank you for releasing me."

Ripto tilted his head backward to locate the intruder and, to his surprise, he was met with the upside-down image of what appeared to be, of all things, a...dragon? It had the basic anatomy of one, yes, but the wings were warped and twisted, certainly unsuitable for flight. Its body appeared to be elongated, towering over most adult dragons, yet it was so thin that it looked malnourished. The scales looked as though they might have been purple at some distant point in the past, but they had lost their hue and faded to a drab grey.

Yet its most unsettling feature was its eyes. Their surfaces glistened with copious moisture, yet Ripto couldn't read much expression from its face. Its green pit-like pupils enveloped most of the visible portion of its eyes, leaving only a small amount of white visible, which was tinged red by bloody veins.

Taking this all in, Ripto eventually asked, "Are you...the spirit of Convexity?"

The dragon-like reptile attempted to focus its eyes on its savior and rambled in a cracking voice, "I used to be a dragon. The serpents, they did it to me, visiting all the time, day and night, night and day, there is no day, no night..."

At this, Ripto feared that he had released something not of this world. This was no treasure at all; it was a walking corpse with its own agenda. "Um... I think I should leave, if you don't mi—"

"No, please stay," the thing pleaded in monotone.

Regretting his decision to break the spork, Ripto continued to backtrack. "Seriously, I am fearing for my life!"

"The monsters, they'll come back. Stay."

The command resounded through Ripto's panicked thoughts and he was emptied of all fear, all ambition, all will. He slowly forced out a word of acceptance. "Yes."

"I think we should be friends. My name is Malefor, what's yours?"

"Ripto."

"Ripto, lead me home. When we arrive, I would like sustenance. Would you kindly?"

"Yes, Malefor."

Now, the two figures trekked back towards the transit currents, the lanky skeleton trailing after the minute raptor.

Currents of magic flowed through space, anchored to asteroids. Ripto was forced to monitor the pods as they shot towards their destinations. Finally, when the correct capsule whizzed by, Malefor teleported himself with his new 'friend' onto its roof once Ripto pointed the vehicle out. As the two sat on the transit, Malefor loosened his grip on Ripto's mind and allowed some autonomy in his responses.

"Ripto, are you my friend?"

"I wouldn't know. How about you stop brainwashing me and then we can talk about being friends, hm?" Of course, Ripto had no plans of gallivanting about with someone of such a despicable species, even if it were possible that this 'Malefor' was a ghost or some sort of alien.

"I apologize for this. I never had a friend. I could not let you escape. Please forgive me."

Having no pity for this dragon's sob story, Ripto huffed and turned away. He would have pleaded for entrance into the transit car had

Malefor not revoked his legs' motor skills.

Malefor's eyes darkened somehow, despite the fact that his pupils took up much of them, and his response held a veiled machete. "You will forgive me. You will be my friend. Eventually..."

Silence hung between the dragon and the raptor, and the transit barreled on towards the Lorefang portal.

(A/N: Hoo boy. Looks like things just got a whole lot more serious. Sorry if it felt like the chapter was jumping all over the place. We were trying to give the impression of days passing by.

So much happened in this chapter. Legend learning to teleport, Classic and Ember learning to fly under their own power, as well as finally clearing the air between them, and now Malefor being here. Didn't Ihy say he wrote him out of this loop, though? Wonder how he got back in, no less being trapped in a spork of all things... Wonder if this has to do with that email he got a few chapters back? Who knows. The loops do odd things in general, so...

Wonder how things are going to go now? And why does Malefor look so malnourished? Only time will tell...

Also, Riv noted how she was surprised that Legend knew what a typewriter was. I personally didn't think it'd be too out of place for them to be in the Legendverse myself but... I guess that's up to interpretation.

Remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and remember to check out the Spyro loops Forum if you're interested in a Spyro Forum for both the Classic and Legend series.

Until next time, this is TokoWH, signing off. Have a nice day! :D)

Get on the arc

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments below.)

Legend 24.1 (Reconnection pt. 1)

Another loop, another day waking up back at the swamp. Spyro had gotten used to it by now, and from what he could tell by the fact that Sparx had failed to understand the meaning when he'd asked him if he liked dragon fruit, and the fact that Cynder hadn't shown up at the swamp, this was going to be a lonely loop. Spyro sighed. These loops were always a thing.

How he wished that he could just teleport to Cynder and save her before it happened, but unfortunately, even after Classic had shown him that teleportation spell, getting used to it and building up his magic was a completely different story. At most, he could muster up enough magical power to teleport from the swamp to the Dragon Temple, and while chain teleportation may have helped, he simply didn't have enough magical power to make it all the way to the Mountain of Malefor before exhausting himself.

For the time being, this meant that he'd have to stick to the usual routine when Cynder wasn't awake: waiting until he came across her at Dante's Freezer and freeing her early with the fury armor. True, he technically could encounter her earlier at the swamp itself, but every time he had heard her roar while heading towards the Dragon Temple, even if he darted straight into the air at that exact moment, Cynder was never anywhere to be seen.

Spyro shook his head. While he hated having Cynder suffer longer than she had too, it also presented him with a unique opportunity. He had tried something like this before, but for once he was planning on putting serious effort into it.

That was still a ways off, though. For now, he had something else he wanted to do this loop.

"What's the matter, little Spyro? You can't fly?" Sparx asked, crossing his arms. He placed a hand on his cheek, a smirk on his face. "Ahh, that's right you walk everywhere. Mmm, that's too bad."

Spyro narrowed his eyes, a slight smirk on his face as Sparx taunted him over the small gorge. In baseline, he handled it by quickly rushing over the bone…structure…things… He *still* wasn't quite sure what those things were. This time, however, he had other plans. Spreading his wings, Spyro took to the air, rushing over the gorge. Before Sparx realized what happened, he found himself grasped in Spyro's paws.

Spyro grinned. "You were saying?"

Sparx's jaw dropped, his eyes going wide. His mouth moved but no words came out. Finally Sparx smacked himself, looking at Spyro with a dumbfounded expression. "How!?"

Spyro chuckled, grinning as he hovered in the air. "Been training in secret. Got a bit tired of all the poking you were giving me about not being able to fly, so I figured I'd surprise you." Letting Sparx go, he narrowed his eyes. "And yes, the look on your face did make it worth it."

Sparx looked dumbfounded for a moment longer, but quickly shook it off and crossed his arms with a smirk.

"Alright, alright, so you can fly now. Took you long enough," he said, turning around and glancing back over his shoulder. "Don't get cocky now, though. Just because you can fly doesn't mean you're a master of it!"

"Oh really?" Spyro asked, raising his eyebrow with a smirk. "Is that a challenge?"

"Bring it on, big boy!" Sparx said, turning back to Spyro with arms crossed. "First one to that freaky cave skull thing is the better flier! Just don't be disappointed when you lose!"

With that, Sparx darted off. Spyro chuckled, darting after him as fast as his wings could carry him. Sparx was always telling him to lighten up, that even Ignitus wasn't above having some fun once in a while. He still wasn't too big on the idea of messing around in a war zone, but that didn't mean he couldn't have fun in his own way.

Sparx may have been his brother and all, but that didn't mean he couldn't wear on him at times with all his teasing and poking. Maybe he had been spending too many loops with Spy, too. Regardless of the reason, it was time Sparx got a taste of his own medicine.

Sparx darted through a thicket of vines, looking back at his brother with a grin. "What's the matter, Spyro? Still working off that baby fat? Too bad you can't take these shortcuts like I can!"

Spyro frowned. As much as he had prepared for this loop, he was still working on a good comeback to those fat jokes…

Classic 24.2:

Spyro awoke in bed—a rather rare occurrence, but still better than awaking midstride. He sank back into it, taking a deep breath as he closed his eyes. Time to sleep in this loop. Relaxing, he shuffled around a bit...before opening his eyes with a raised eyebrow. Something felt off. Not the kind of off he had grown somewhat used to because dragons didn't invest in heating lamps. No, this was more like he wasn't alone…

Spyro picked himself up, glancing to his side. He tilted his head, noticing a figure curled up next to him under the blanket. He paused, a frown slowly forming on his face.

' *Oh, dragon nuggets...'* he thought, eyes wide as he slowly raised his paw to the edge of the blanket. *'Please don't be who I think this is, please don't be who I think this is, please don't be who I think this is…!'*

Holding his breath, Spyro grabbed the blanket and quickly pulled it off, screwing his eyes shut. Daring to take a peek, he saw pink scales.

' *Crud!'* he thought, slowly backing away in the bed. *'Please be awake! Please be awake! Please be awake!'*

Spyro nearly fell backwards but managed to catch himself before whatever he'd bumped into caused him to roll out of the bed. He looked back, noticing another figure starting to move under the covers.

"Ngh…"

Spyro's frown deepened. *'Please be don't be who I think this is! Please be don't be who I think this is! Please be don't be who I think this is!'*

Slowly but surely, a head poked its way out of the covers, revealing a set of ebony scales and emerald eyes.

' *Dragon nuggets!'* Spyro paused like a deer frozen in the headlights, staring blankly at Cynder as she mirrored his gaze. *'Please be awake!'*

"What's the matter, dear?"

' *Ihy, I swear to whatever deity you Admins pray to—!'*

"Ugh…"

Spyro's left eye twitched as he glanced back to see Ember waking up. She rose with a big grin, wrapping her forelegs around him.

"Morning," she said sweetly, giving him a kiss on the cheek.

Spyro cringed, awkwardly glancing over to Cynder. She smiled, moving in and joining the hug. Spyro gulped, noticing a sudden glint coming from his paw. Looking down, his pupils and irises shrunk at the sight of two golden rings on one of his claws. All the while, in the back of his mind, all he could think of was that there was a probably drunk dragon somewhere laughing his tail off.

"What's wrong, Spyro?" Cynder asked, pulling back and tilting her head. "Are you feeling okay?"

"I'm not sure what's wrong with him," she said, glancing over to Ember. He's been acting weird since he got up."

Ember placed a claw on her chin. Spyro could only stare from one dragoness to the other, all the while wondering if he could make a break for the window before they both latched onto him. Finally, Ember smiled, wrapping her forelegs around him once more.

"Are you not feeling well, Spyro?" she asked, placing a paw on Spyro's forehead. "Don't worry, just lay down and relax. Cynder and I are always here for you."

"Always," Cynder echoed, placing her forelegs around him.

Both dragonesses simultaneously gave Spyro a kiss on the cheek. He shuddered, uttering a meek *'meep'* in response.

Meanwhile…

Ihy looked down at his terminal. The screen showing Classic's universe was flashing with a bright red error message. Clicking on it, he was met with a message stating that the loop had crashed. Ihy scratched his head, raising an eyebrow as he reached for a can of beer.

"You know, sometimes I really can't help but wonder about that dragon…"

Legend 24.3: (Concept by AbZ, written by Toko)

Spyro awoke, in both meanings of the word, in a slight daze. He glanced around, noting his surroundings appeared to be of his world's usual decor. He was in a bed, though whether that meant a new loop had started or not was hard to tell, what with his recent adaption to using them in his home loop. In any case, he hopped out of it, briefly giving a cat-like stretch with a yawn. Giving himself a quick onceover, he noted he was in his teenage body.

' *Hmm… Looks like it might be a new loop,'* he noted, heading out of his room and glancing around. *'Doesn't look like the Dragon Temple, either, so...'*

It was then he heard a knock ring out through his current residence. Raising his head, he quickly headed down the stairs and towards the front door. Opening it, his eyes went wide. Standing there was a large purple dragon that towered over him, spikes jetting from his shoulders. For a second, Spyro almost mistook him for Malefor and was about to react accordingly by pulling out his custom armor and sending him flying with a Convexity blast, but before that could happen, the dragon spoke up.

"Do you know the meaning of a true dragon?"

Spyro paused, just about to summon the armor from his subspace. He glanced up, noting that, despite his utterly demonic exterior, the stranger had a kind smile on his face.

"...I'm sorry?" Spyro finally said, keeping an eye on the dragon while subconsciously holding onto his armor set in his subspace.

"The ancestors know," the dragon said, a hardcover book levitating out in front of him, a thin glowing layer of purple magic surrounding

it. "The ancestors watch over us all. It is important to pay respect to them."

"Yeeeeeah…" Spyro said, raising an eyebrow, his paw still firmly rested on the door handle. "Isn't that common knowledge, though?"

"Oh, good! So you believe in the ancestors as well!" the dragon said, a grin on his face as the book levitated down towards Spyro.

Grasping it in his paws, Spyro looked down at the cover. He raised his eyebrow as he read the title: *'Ode to the Ancestors* .' Spyro looked up blankly and the stranger looked down at him a smile. Several very awkward moments passed before Spyro finally backed through the doorway.

"Uh… Thanks?" he finally said, placing the book on a nearby table.

"You're welcome."

Several more seconds passed before Spyro slowly began to turn away. "Well, then, if that's all…"

"Hold up!"

Spyro looked back at the giant dragon on his doorstep in confusion. The stranger still had a wide grin on his face. Spyro blinked.

"What's the problem?" he asked, tilting his head. "Isn't that all you wanted to give me?"

"Well, yes, but I still need to tell you about the ancestors," the dragon replied, taking a refined stance.

At this, Spyro raised an eyebrow. "Didn't I already tell you I know about the ancestors?"

"Well, yes," the dragon said, his expression going blank. Quickly shaking it off, he reaffixed his grin. "But I still need to tell you about them."

"Why?" Spyro asked, narrowing his eyes. "I mean, if I already know about them, what's the point in telling me about them again? Aren't you more or less just wasting both of our time by doing this?"

The dragon looked down with a blank expression and Spyro waited for a response, an annoyed glint in his eyes. The dragon raised his paw, opening his mouth in an attempt to respond. Several seconds passed before said paw went to his chin. Raising it again, he opened his mouth…only to promptly close it again and return his paw to his chin. Finally, the dragon shook his head, placing his paw back on the ground.

"The ancestors are, as one would expect, our ancestors. It is important to know all they've—"

Spyro let out an annoyed groan as the demonic-looking dragon began his speech. Resisting the urge to facepalm, he began closing his door. Ignitus had told him to respect his elders, but he got a sneaking suspicion that he'd allow him to make an exception just this once.

"Huh? Hey, wait!" the dragon said, quickly pressing his body against the door. "I need to tell you about the ancestors! It's important!"

Spyro growled, quickly pushing his body against the door. Tapping into his earth element, he dug his paws into the ground, slowly shuffling them forward in an attempt to gain some leverage.

"I already know about the ancestors! I pay my respect to them every week!" Spyro said, puffs of smoke beginning to escape his nostrils. "Thank you for trying to tell me about them, but I am already well aware of them and don't need to be informed about them!"

And thus the shoving match begun. The elder of the two had the advantage of size and strength, but Spyro would not be outdone, stone encasing his legs as he slowly inched forward. He finally started to gain ground and the elder dragon began to scowl.

"If you stop now, the ancestors may forgive what you're doing!" the dragon said before glancing back at the pathway. "Cynder! Help! I need backup!"

At this, Spyro blinked. Raising his head, he let go of the door…and promptly got a face full of it when it flung open and hit him in the muzzle. Rubbing his snout, he placed a claw on the side of the door to steady himself and scowled up at the dragon, who merely gave a shy grin in response.

Several seconds passed before the elder dragon looked back at the path. "Seriously, Cynder. Could use your help here!"

"I am not coming out!"

Spyro glanced out at the street. It definitely sounded like Cynder. Clearing his throat, he raised his voice, hoping that she would hear. "Maybe she's hungry? I have some extra dragon fruit I'd be willing to share."

Several moments passed and Spyro got no response. At first, he was unsure if she had heard him. He was about to make one more attempt before her voice finally rang out. "I plead the fifth!"

Spyro blinked. He could only assume from the response that she was awake, but her reluctance to reveal herself must have meant this variant was just as unpleasant for her as it currently was for him. He glanced up, finally remembering there was a dragon who looked like he'd escaped Tartarus on his doorstep, trying to teach him about something he already knew. The elder looked down with a smile.

"So, about those ancestors—"

Spyro groaned, smacking his head against the door several times. Looking up at the rambling dragon, he forced a smile.

"Gee, this is all great and everything, but it would sure be nice if *someone* was also here to *help me!* " Spyro forced out, looking back

out at the street with a forced smile.

Hoping his coded plea wouldn't go unanswered, Spyro kept his eyes glued on the street. Several seconds passed and, not getting a response, Spyro began to sweat. Finally, a long heavy groan echoed out…and Spyro saw a sight that caused his jaw to drop.

Cynder slowly dragged herself out from behind the nearby bushes, uncomfortably walking towards the yard as she struggled to keep her balance. The frills of her puffy ebony dress flowed in the wind and she struggled to keep from tripping over herself as her claws kept getting caught in her skirt. All the while, Cynder kept her eyes firmly on the two dragons, her expression stating clearly 'you laugh, you *die.* '

Spyro could only blink as he watched her uncomfortably waddle her way up towards him. The elder dragon looked down at her, a grin on his face.

"Ah, good! Nice to see you finally decided to join us, Cynder," he said, a grin on his face. "Now then, mind helping me explain the joys the ancestors bring to our friend here?"

Cynder's left eye twitched as she glanced up at the elder before back at the still flabbergasted Spyro. Finally forcing a smile, she spoke up.

"Of course. If you don't mind, I'd love to come in and explain everything…" she forced out, her eyes pleading as she looked at Spyro.

"Oh, uh, of course! Feel free to come on in."

With a smile, Cynder made her way in as fast as the ridiculous dress she was wearing would allow her. The elder smiled, beginning to follow…only to be met with a face full of door.

Rubbing his snout, he looked at the closed door. Frowning, he once again began to knock, rattling off facts about the ancestors. Both Spyro and Cynder leant up against the door and Spyro quickly locked it. Looking over at Cynder, he tilted his head. "Okay… So, about the explanation…"

Cynder sighed, placing a paw on her forehead. "Long story short, apparently it's normal for dragons of this world to go from door to door to try and make others believe in the ancestors… Even if they already do."

"That seems…odd," Spyro said, raising an eyebrow. "Disregarding the whole 'telling those who already know about the ancestors' thing, that seems a bit excessive. If anything, that sounds like it would cause people to be turned off from believing…" Spyro paused, looking up and down at the dress Cynder was wearing. "...By the way, what's with that?"

Cynder placed her other free paw over her face, letting out a low groan. "Apparently, it's to help convert others. The idea being… being…" She growled, leaning her head against the door. "...People would be more willing to listen to a pretty face."

Cynder shook her head, glancing over to Spyro with a flat look. "The only thing that's kept me from tearing the Sorcerer apart is the fact that he's good this loop, and… Well, you know."

Spyro blinked. He could only assume the Sorcerer was that demonic-looking dragon outside. Shaking it off, he sighed. "That sounds so stupid. People should be allowed to believe what they want. No one should force their beliefs on others... "

He shook his head. "In any case, we should probably figure out what to do now. Considering you're supposed to be working for this guy, I doubt the Warfang guards will be too happy that I locked you in here with me... So, what should it be? Bad loop variant plan number twenty-three?"

"Fine with me," Cynder said. Pausing for a moment, she placed a claw on her dress, pulling at the collar. "But first… Mind doing me a favor, Spyro?"

"Yeah, sure. What is it?"

" *Get this thing the heck off me!* "

Classic 24.4:

Ember awoke with a yawn, slowly sitting up in her bed, wiping away the last remnants of sleepiness as she looked around her room. Getting out of the bed, she walked over to the window and looked out at the familiar surroundings of Dragon Village.

' *Looks like baseline,'* she thought, moving away from the window and towards her bedroom door. *'In that case, looks like I shoul—'*

Ember's thoughts were disrupted when a flash of light flared in front of her. Not a second later, a familiar purple dragon stood there with a wide grin on his face. Ember blinked. "Spyro? Wha—"

"No time to explain!" he said, quickly rushing over to her. "You just have to see it for yourself!"

And thus, before Ember could protest, both dragons disappeared in a flash of light.

The two dragons soon reappeared in Spyro's all-too-familiar starting point for baseline, the Artisan homeworld. Everything was in full swing as the camera crew began their interview. Ember steadied herself, grabbing her forehead in an attempt to regain her balance. Shaking her head, she glanced at Spyro. "Spyro? What the heck is going on?"

"As I said, you just have to see it for yourself!"

"Why? Wha—"

"It's been peaceful here in the five butts…or was it six...for a dragon's age!"

Ember paused, blinking a few times before looking over towards the camera crew with wide eyes. The elder nervously shuffled around in front of the camera as always, saying his lines without a hint of anything that would imply something was out of sorts.

"We now have twelve thousand butts…or is it fourteen thousand?"

Ember could only watch on in wide-eyed confusion, occasionally glancing at Spyro with a flat look. He was snickering to himself like a youngling.

"What about this G'Nasty Butt character?"

At this, Spyro could no longer hold it in and busted up laughing as he fell to the ground. Ember looked down at him with a raised eyebrow, shaking her head before looking back at the ongoing interview.

"Now, I understand he's found a magic spell to turn butts into warriors for cause…"

"I'll take that question," the blue dragon elder chimed in as per usual. "Gnasty Butt is a simple butt…"

At this, Ember snorted and Spyro continued to bust up as he rolled on the ground.

"He has been contained in a remote butt—"

Ember began to chuckle to herself, placing a paw over her mouth in a desperate attempt to keep her composure.

"—and is no threat to the Dragon Butts."

Despite all her attempts to keep what dignity she had, Ember could no longer hold it in and joined Spyro in his fit of laughter as she fell to the ground, laughing like the many younglings at the day-care. Neither dragon paid attention as the elder called Gnasty ugly and all the dragons turned to stone around them.

Finally taking in a deep breath, Ember looked over at Spyro. "What the heck? What is up with this loop?"

"Not sure, but already it's turning out to be a winner," Spyro said, getting to his paws as he took several deep breaths. "As soon as I heard one of the elders complaining how the Artisan 'Butt' was unusually cold this time of year, I knew I had to get any awake looper in on this."

He turned to Ember with a grin. "This loop is going to be amazing. In before Ripto complains about not liking butts!"

Both dragons busted up laughing once again. They may have gotten many strange variants in the past, but this one was already proving to be way funnier than it should have been…

Legend 24.5 (King of the Dragons pt. 1)

Spyro awoke mid-stride as he paced down one of the many paths of Warfang, nearly tripping over himself in the process. He frowned. Awakening while walking was never fun. Quickly checking his in-loop memories, he grunted. Another loop taking place after he and Cynder had defeated Malefor. Spyro smirked to himself. For being trapped in a time warp, variants that took place after beating Malefor were surprisingly common. Not that he was complaining, mind you. He chalked it up to Ihy possibly feeling generous enough to make this variant common.

His in-loop memories told him he was currently on his way to the temple in Warfang; something to do with diplomatic business and so on. Spyro shook his head. He wasn't exactly thrilled by loops where

he had to do stuff like paperwork and the like, but it was a welcome vacation compared to fighting a war.

Taking a deep breath, he grinned. He didn't get many reprieves from the war, so he intended to enjoy this one. Memories told him Cynder had taken up residence at Warfang's temple, though Spyro had been pushing for her to move in to his home in the city. If Cynder was looping, that might come to pass now. Spyro chuckled, realizing he was getting far too ahead of himself. For now, best just to play this loop out like it had intended.

Spyro sat behind an elder green dragon, his orange underbelly blending in rather well with the surroundings of the room. The elder turned back to Spyro with a smirk.

"Okay then. Repeat after me, Spyro," he said, clearing his throat. "'Comment maintenant vache brune.'"

"'C-comment maintenant vache brune,'" Spyro repeated, trying his best to not stumble over his words.

"Good. Now, try this," the elder said, taking a deep breath. "'La pluie en Espagne tombe principalement dans la plaine.'"

Spyro blinked, taking a deep breath as the nervous feeling he had deep down started to grow. "Uh… L-la pluie en E-espagne tombe p-princi… princi…"

Spyro groaned, lowering his head in defeat. The elder walked over to him, patting him gently on the back.

"Do not feel discouraged, Spyro," he said, giving a soft smile. "Your understanding of Libellules has improved vastly compared to how long it was taking you before to even understand a word." The elder picked himself up. "You just need to get the pronunciations down. In the meantime, I feel like you have earned a break."

Spyro watched as the elder began to head off. He took a deep breath, happy to finally have a rest. Knowing other languages was a key part of being a diplomat, from what he had understood, and 'Libellules'—or, as it was more commonly known in the multiverse, 'French'—was the second most common language in his universe. He had no idea if that rang true in baseline, but regardless, there wasn't much he could really do about that if it wasn't the case.

Shaking it off, Spyro yawned, giving a cat-like stretch as he picked himself up. Glancing around, he smirked. *'Still have yet to check if Cynder's awake. Should probably do that now.'*

And thus, with a spring in his step, Spyro walked out into the hall, beginning his search for his mate.

In the deep dark depths of the sea, a faint glow shone defiantly through the murky gloom, emitting from a strange icy structure wedged in a crevasse. The glowing increased and faded like the pulse of a heartbeat, illuminating a vaguely dragon-shaped form within. Finally, with one bright glow, a blue beam broke through the ice in a magnificent flash and the figure surged out, heading for the surface.

It growled. This wasn't the first time it had woken up frozen in ice, but it was always painful when it happened. Reaching the surface, it looked around. These surroundings were unfamiliar to it, and the dragon-like beast scowled. It looked like it wasn't in its own world this loop and, on top of that, it wasn't even remotely close to its normal size, being roughly half the size of a human.

The beast let out an annoyed snort, an odd greenish-blue smoke escaping its nostrils. It hated loops where it was even just half its normal size, so barely being larger than those wretched humans was nothing it was particularly happy about. True, there were loops where it aided them, but there were just as many where it detested them. In truth, it had forgotten what its alignment was long ago. The many

loops in had been through, where its alignment and past had changed on a whim, had done nothing to help.

The beast looked around, spotting a landmass not far off. Having long since forgotten its true self, it had decided many loops ago how it would spend its time. It would find a place where it could live out the rest of the loop and god help anyone who got in its way, looper or otherwise...

Through in-loop memories alone, Spyro managed to find his way to Cynder's usual room. He didn't know the Warfang temple as well as he did the original Dragon Temple, but it wasn't too hard to get used to. Looking around the room, he spotted Cynder by the balcony. He smiled, quickly heading over to her. As he approached her, he discreetly pulled out a dragon fruit from his subspace.

"Dragon fruit?" he offered, holding it out in front of her.

Cynder jumped slightly, but quickly composed herself as she looked over with a small smile. "We really should come up with a better way to tell if we're awake," she said, draping a wing over Spyro. "To be honest, I really don't care for dragon fruit."

"Fair enough," Spyro said, giving a chuckle as he put the fruit back in his subspace. "So, Cynder. Now that you're awake, have you given any thought to what my unawake self kept asking?"

"...Maybe," Cynder said, looking out towards the night sky. "It depends on what Warfang at large thinks of me." She closed her eyes, giving a sigh. "I really hate waking up late after the baseline… It's always a guessing game of whether or not the loops are feeling generous and Warfang at large has forgiven me, if at least some of the people have forgiven me, or if I need to head for the other side of the realms as soon as I wake up…"

"You shouldn't care what they think, Cynder," Spyro said, putting a wing over her. "Especially since those opinions will change after the

loop is over." He leant in closer, giving Cynder a peck on the cheek. "From what I understand, bad variants are just something all loopers need to deal with at some point."

"I know, but this different," she said, sighing as she pressed her head against his chest. "If it was because of something like my unawake self being a common thief who tormented the town by stealing valuables from others, then I'd be able to take it better...but…"

"...It's because it's something that happened in baseline?" Spyro asked, looking at Cynder with concern.

"Yeah…" she muttered, closing her eyes. "I know it's stupid and that I should be moving on at this point, but that still doesn't change the fact that it stings whenever I hear them muttering behind my back…"

Spyro frowned. As much as he wanted to tell her it was alright, he knew he'd be repeating old grounds he'd brought up countless times. Ember's words from their first loop together rang in his head. *You can only help someone cope so much before you just need to help them move on.*

He closed his eyes, an idea already formulating in his head. Looking down at Cynder, he smiled.

"You know, there doesn't appear to be any life-threatening, world-ending threats so far," Spyro said, beginning to grin. "Considering we don't get many loops like this in our own world, how about we spend it on a vacation? You know, exploring the world together? We rarely do diverge from the paths we tread in baseline, despite our world being so vast."

Cynder glanced up, eyes wide. "Really?"

"Sure," Spyro said with a grin, nuzzling his mate gently. "Though things may change from variant to variant, there's one constant word of mouth that I hear of a nearby beach that's lovely this time of year."

Spyro looked her in the eyes, the grin never leaving his face. "So, what do you say?"

"It'd certainly be a nice change of pace," Cynder said, a small smile on her face.

"Then it's settled." Spyro said, pulling her closer. "First thing tomorrow, we're off to explore the realms." He chuckled, closing his eyes. "Conveniently enough, this loop has been forcing me to learn what is apparently the second most common language among dragons."

"Really?" Cynder asked, looking up with a raised eyebrow. "What's that?"

"Libellules," Spyro said, glancing at her from the corner of his eye. "Or French, as it's more commonly known in the multiverse."

"Interesting." Cynder said, a small smirk appearing on her face. "Can I hear some?"

"Well, I'm not particularly fluent in it yet, but…" Spyro cleared his throat as he looked over to Cynder with smirk. "Vous êtes mon ébène rose dans un jardin de l'espoir."

Cynder tilted her head, eying him curiously. "Neat… What did it mean, though?"

"Well, if I pronounced it right…" Spyro said, glancing away with a sheepish grin, a blush glowing through his purple scales. "'You are my ebony rose in a garden of hope.'"

Cynder blinked, looking at Spyro with a blank expression. Before long, she began to snicker to herself. Spyro raised an eyebrow, a slight frown on his face. "What?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing…" she said, taking a deep breath as she gently gazed at her mate. "I just found it hard to believe you would

use such a cheesy pickup line."

"Yeah, well, they sound a lot less cheesy in French…" Spyro said, glancing down as his face blushed beet-red.

Cynder sighed, snuggling up against him as she closed her eyes, resting her head against his chest. "Anymore lines you got, preferably in French?"

Spyro smirked, wrapping his wings around her. "Weeellllll…" he said, bringing his head down to her ear, lowering his voice to a whisper. "Tu es mon bel ange, envoyé du ciel au-dessus."

"And that means?"

"'You are my beautiful angel, sent down from heavens above,'" Spyro said, giving her a kiss. With a smirk, he whispered in her ear again. "Vous êtes la plus belle dragonne de tous. Personne ne peut comparer."

"And that?" Cynder asked, glancing up with a smile.

"You are the most beautiful dragoness of all. None can compare."

Cynder let out a content sigh, snuggling up against Spyro as she closed her eyes. He did the same in return, resting his head gently on Cynder's as the two embraced under the night sky. After a few seconds, the two dragons gently pulled back, looking each other in the eyes. Leaning forward, they gently pressed their lips together and stayed that way for several seconds.

As tranquil as the scene may have been, peace was, unfortunately, never guaranteed.

A shockwave rang out as the town below lit up in a flash of crimson and orange, fire roaring skyward as if to protest their peaceful moment. Spyro and Cynder jolted away from each other, jaws dropping as they looked down at the madness with wide eyes.

"Wh-what the heck is going on!?" Cynder asked, trembling as the screams of the townsfolk filled the air.

Spyro could only look on in horror. At the back of his mind, any hope that he and Cynder could finally go on a relaxing vacation shattered to pieces. Some part of him wanted to cling on to that hope; maybe whatever had happened was just some kind of experiment gone wrong.

But any hope of that was also shattered when a colossal blue beam lit up the night, tearing through houses like a hot knife through butter, and a solemn yet haunting roar pierced the air.

Classic 24.6: (Sick loop continued)

"Ugh…"

Spyro miserably opened his eyes. There were dark bags under them and his scales' rich shade of purple was paler than usual. He took a deep breath, which was immediately interrupted by a fit of coughing. His throat felt like it was on fire. He groaned, using whatever strength he could muster to wobbly pick himself up, stumbling slightly as his head hung low. Coughing several more times, he forced his head up, but the sunlight made him recoil and his head pounded even worse.

"Yo, Spyro!" Sparx flew over to his best friend with a grin, but all it took was one glance from Spyro to cause him to freeze midflight, recoiling as he held his hands in front of his face.

"Holy crap!" Sparx said, eyes going wide. "You look terrible, Spyro!"

Spyro rolled his eyes and snorted, attempting to take a few steps forward. Nearly toppling over himself, he paused, legs shaking as he struggled to keep standing. Sparx flew over to him.

"Maybe you should lay down?" Sparx said, eyes full of concern.

"I'm…I'm fine, Sparx," Spyro forced out, taking a deep breath. "I just didn't get much sleep last ni…ni…!" His attempts at protesting were quickly cut short by a mighty sneeze and he fell to the ground.

Sparx narrowed his eyes. "Spyro, quit trying to cover it up," he said flatly, shaking his head. "Just face facts. You're sick. That's all there is to it."

"I…I can't be sick, though," Spyro said miserably, closing his eyes and placing a paw on his throbbing head. "I'm a looper, for Pete's sake! Loopers shouldn't be able to…to…"

Sparx quickly flew out of the way, dodging a sneeze. Spyro let out a low moan, lowering his head to the ground in defeat. Sparx sighed, looking down with a frown. "Now, calm down. Just get some rest. I'll go get the elders—"

"No!" Spyro exclaimed, and quickly dissolved into a fit of coughing as if his body was protesting his attempt at raising his voice. "N-no… elders…!" he said between coughs, looking up at Sparx with a sharp glare.

"Wha—why?" Sparx asked, eyes wide. "Why not? Spyro, you can barely stand!"

"I'm not going through that again!" Spyro squeaked out, a fit of coughing following shortly after. After a few moments of this, he took a deep breath. Glancing back up, he lowered his voice to a whisper in hopes of keeping another fit of coughing from happening. "Remember what happened back when I was five?"

Spyro shuddered. The elders had always been heavy believers in home remedies as opposed to actual medical treatments. Spyro had never really gotten sick all that much, at least not heavily. The only time he remembered being this sick was back when he was five, and that experience alone had given him enough reason not to trust the elders. Eating raw garlic, drinking vinegar, that odd concoction one of the elders cooked up that felt like he was drinking sand... Spyro

groaned. The thought of that last 'home remedy' alone made him feel like throwing up.

Sparx narrowed his eyes and frowned. "Well, what are we supposed to do? You can't just lay around the Artisan Realm. Like it or not, the elders will take note eventually."

Spyro groaned, glancing up at Sparx as he struggled to keep his eyes open. "Before I got sick, I checked on how many other loopers were awake…" He sighed, lowering his head as he took a deep breath. "Ember's awake… I'm not sure about Hunter, though. Go get her and then check if Hunter's awoken in the time since I last checked."

"What about you?" Sparx asked, looking down at him with concern.

"I'm going to hide in the hedge maze until you get back…" Spyro said, forcing himself up and miserably starting to drag himself along. "It'll be a cold day in Skelos Badlands before I let the elders catch me sick again…"

Sparx rolled his eyes as he watched Spyro drag himself into hiding. Somehow, he got the feeling that, whatever harebrained scheme he was cooking up, it'd be fair more complicated and convoluted than just telling the elders. Regardless, if there was one thing his Spyro was known for, it was his stubbornness. With nothing else to say on the subject, Sparx flew off towards Dragon Village.

Legend 24.7:

Spyro tried his best to keep his composure, but Sparx's latest attempt at messing around in the loops made it hard for him to keep up with his role, so to speak. He and Cynder were at Boyzitbig, up to the part where they had to try to outrun a train while on a trolley.

Cynder glanced over at him, an eyebrow raised. "You sure this is a good idea?"

"Not really," Spyro said flatly, shaking his head. "We did promise Sparx, though, so…"

The two dragons sped along on the trolley as the train chased behind them. Sparx looked back at it with a smirk before winking at Spyro and Cynder. Spyro sighed.

"Mommy, Daddy, I want to ride the train!" Sparx said in a mock childish voice as he pointed at the locomotive.

Spyro took a deep breath and exhaled, steadying himself for what he was about to say. "Now, Sparx. We already got you that Dreadwing a few days ago."

"But I like trains!" Sparx whined, a frown on his face.

The train conductor could only look on in confusion as the conversation went on, scratching his head.

"Now, Spyro," Cynder said, raising a claw. "What's one train going to do? It's not like we get many chances to have luxuries during the war."

"We can't give him everything on a silver platter, Cynder," Spyro said flatly, glancing over to her. "He's already spoiled enough as is."

Spyro smirked, the annoyed look on Sparx's face confirming that his backhanded acting wasn't lost on his brother. Despite the coded attempt at voicing his opinions of what was going on, Sparx shook off Spyro's words and kept to the script he had planned out in his head.

" *Pleeease?* " Sparx begged, putting on an innocent smile. "I promise to clean my room when we get back home!"

"You should really consider it, Spyro," Cynder said, a smirk on her face. "For such a little dragonfly, he can make a surprisingly big mess."

Sparx groaned as both dragons started laughing up a storm. Shaking it off, Spyro looked at him with a grin. "Fine, but no more after this. Promise?"

As Sparx gave a nod, Spyro and Cynder spread their wings, flying back and grabbing onto the sides of the train. The conductor barely had time to gasp before he was knocked off his own train. Spyro took hold of the controls, slowing it down to make sure it didn't go careening into lava like it normally did. Cynder looked over to Spyro and Sparx, tilting her head.

"You know, Sparx's attempt at a joke aside…" she said, raising an eyebrow. "Why didn't you two just do this in baseline? Seems a lot easier than getting into a cannon duel with it."

Spyro looked blank for a moment before he turned to Sparx. Sparx merely shrugged in response.

"Hey, don't look at me," Sparx said, crossing his arms. "It's easier to spot the simple solutions when you're not afraid for your life."

Classic 24.8: (What is a Hero? pt. 1)

Spyro awoke like he almost always did, herding sheep in the background as the camera crew interviewed the dragons about Gnasty Gnorc. He took one look at the camera crew and huffed, scowling as he turned away.

Sparx looked down at him with a grin, doing his best to suppress a chuckle. "What's the matter? You haven't tried dumping ice buckets on them yet."

Spyro groaned, shaking his head. "Ha ha, Sparx. Very funny."

"Hey, I'm still funnier than the other Sparx, you've got to admit," Sparx said, still smirking.

"Whatever. Let's just forget about that, alright?" Spyro said, looking back over to the interview. "Besides, any second now Gnasty's going to strike."

"—he's been contained in a remote world and is no threat to the Dragon Kingdom. Besides, he is *ugly.* "

Spyro held up his paw, wagging it backwards and forwards and counting the seconds. Reaching 'one,' Spyro held his index claw steady and mouthed 'go' as he closed his eyes. There was a few seconds' pause before he opened his eyes, glancing up at the sky with a raised eyebrow.

"...Wait, shouldn't Gnasty be turning the dragons to stone about now?" he asked, glancing at Sparx.

Sparx merely shrugged and both turned their heads towards the interview. Unlike the countless thousands of times they had seen this take place before, the interview was still going on. Sparx glanced back at Spyro.

"Maybe it's a variant where Gnasty's a bit less sensitive about his appearance?" he suggested, giving a shrug.

Spyro narrowed his eyes. "I don't know... I'm getting the feeling something's up with this loop. C'mon," he said, bringing up his command line as he began to walk away.

"Wha—Spyro? Where we going?" Sparx asked, scratching his head.

Spyro looked back, giving a smirk. "Gnorc hunting, Sparx. What else?"

In a flash of polygons, Spyro and Sparx appeared in Gnasty's arena. Spyro glanced around, disturbed by the eerie silence. He narrowed his eyes and walked forward. "Yo, Gnasty! Where you at!?"

His voice echoed through the empty corridors of Gnasty's arena and Spyro groaned as he was met with no response. Sparx began to circle as he flew over to Spyro, frowning.

"I don't know, Spyro. I don't like this one bit..." he said, glancing sharply upward. "It's quiet, but I can't help but feel like we're being watched..."

"Eh, calm down, Sparx. You're probably being paranoid," Spyro said, looking around as he spread his wings. He smirked. "Besides, we can easily handle most non-looping threats, anyways, so even if we are being watched, we shouldn't have much to worry about."

With that, Spyro flew up towards the platform where Gnasty usually stood at the start of their so-called fight. He looked onward down the path Gnasty usually ran along, narrowing his eyes. Cupping his paws around his mouth, he took a deep breath. "Hey! Gnasty! Where are ya, you ugly gnorc!?"

Spyro paused as his voice echoed outward and through the arena. His expression went flat. "Okay, if Gnasty didn't come running from that..." he muttered, turning around and jumping back down into the arena.

"Maybe it's a variant where the bad guys don't exist?" Sparx asked, giving a shrug.

"Maybe. I don't know... I'm beginning to think you were right when you said that something was off."

As the two spoke about what could possibly be going on, a bleeding red light shone from the rafters. Through a red screen, its targeting access focused on the purple dragon below. Spyro paused midsentence, raising a paw in front of Sparx as he looked around. Despite the complete silence, he narrowed his eyes.

In a swift motion, Spyro back-flipped and grabbed Sparx, barely managing to get out of the way in time as something slammed down

from the ceiling. He skidded to a stop on three paws, letting Sparx go while lowering into attack position. As the dust began to clear, Spyro raised his head.

In front of him was some sort of robot, its color scheme black and gold like Legend's fury armor. The machine beast walked on two legs and had a club-like arm on one side. A small turret protruded from its chest. Its head curved directly into its body, lacking either neck or chin, and a single red light shone a few inches above its turret. The robot rose up, its red eye set firmly on Spyro.

Spyro merely smirked in response. "So, we're fighting robots this loop? No sweat! I'll have you know, I've dealt with my far share of robots even in baseline!"

The robot didn't respond, merely planting its feet firmly on the ground as its turret began to fire. Spyro was off in an instant, managing to keep ahead of the bullets as he circled around the arena. The robot slowly traced him, finally ceasing fire when it could turn no further. Freeing its feet from the ground, it began to chase Spyro, its massive club-arm lifting as it split into three claw-like appendages.

Spyro glanced back with a cocky grin, rolling out of the way as the robot struck the ground where he had been. He let loose a wave of flames, but the robot didn't even flinch as it freed its arm from the ground. Spyro shook his head.

'Right, metal. Derp!'

With that thought in mind, Spyro charged forth horns first. The robot raised its arm in front of itself as Spyro slammed into it, sending it sliding back as its feet dug into the ground. It came to a stop with Spyro still attempting to push forward and swung its arm forth, sending him tumbling back, desperately trying to regain his footing.

Coming to a stop by digging his claws into the ground, Spyro looked on with wide eyes as the robot raised its club-claw in front of it.

'I-it didn't even scratch the paint!' he thought, though was quick to brush it off as he scowled. *'Alright, fine! If the usual doesn't work, it's time to get into the more advanced stuff!'*

Spyro began to glow as a bluish-white translucent energy surrounded his claws. Chi flowed through him and he gave a cocky smirk. He began dodging left and right as the robot began rapidly firing at him. Ducking under a swing of its club-arm, Spyro brought his chi claws up, metal sparking and causing the robot to stumble back. He grinned…but it was quickly wiped off his face when the robot steadied itself, appearing no worse for wear.

' *What the heck is this thing made out of!?'* Spyro thought, jaw dropping as the robot charged forward.

Barely dodging out of the way in time, Spyro rolled to the side as the robot brought its club down. Jumping up to avoid being blindsided, he barely had time to realize what was happening before the robot ploughed into him, sending him tumbling back. Shaking his head as he looked up, Spyro gasped, barely rolling out of the way in time to avoid being smashed with the club.

Getting to his paws, he began to pant, trying everything he could to steady his nerves. *'Okay, stay calm. It has to have some weakness. If there's one thing I've learned from my adventures, it's that all big enemies have some sort of obvious weakness.'*

Spyro gritted his teeth as the robot aimed its turret at him once again. With no time to spare, he opened his command line and teleported to the other side of the room. The robot jolted, turning left and right as it searched for him. As Spyro rematerialized on the other side of the room, he looked at the robot with a scowl.

' *Alright, you bucket of scrap! Let's see how well you fight after I fry your circuits!'*

As the robot finally caught on, turning around with club raised, it barely had time to notice the sparks above its head before it was

slammed with a bolt of magical lightning. The robot staggered back, twitching slightly as it struggled to keep balance. Spyro smirked and ran a non-elemental magical blast. It slammed into the robot, sending it toppling to the ground.

Grinning, Spyro stepped forward with a confident stance. "Okay. You do not like magic at all." A puff of smoke escaped his nostrils. "Well, I hate to say it, but it sucks to be you right now!"

With that, Spyro fired several bolts of lightning at the mechanical beast. It continued to stumble back before smacking into the wall. Spyro smirked, charging forward as he fired a blast of magical energy. The blast connected with a tremendous bang, leaving an impact on the wall, and the robot began to spark. Before it could regain balance, Spyro was already on it, charging one final lightning blast into it at full force.

The robot let out several strange mechanical noises, its red light blinking before finally going dull, and it fell to the ground with a resounding thud. Spyro smirked, walking over to it and placing his front paws on its head.

"Well, that's a system shock if I've ever seen one."

Sparx rolled his eyes. "Ha, ha. Bad one liners aside…" he said, looking down at the robot with narrowed eyes. "Exactly what is this thing? And where the heck is Gnasty?"

"It's probably just a variant," Spyro said, nonchalantly waving his paw. "This might actually be pretty interesting. I've been getting tired of kicking the usual butts."

Spyro got off the robot and turned around with a grin. "Spyro the Dragon: Robo Smasher. Nah, doesn't roll off the tongue… Spyro the Dragon: Mechanical Menace? Eh, maybe."

Sparx shook his head as Spyro walked away, rambling off titles for himself. Glancing back at the robot, Sparx narrowed his eyes. After

spending several moments staring at it, he frowned. As he turned around and followed after Spyro, he couldn't shake the feeling that there was something up with this loop.

Legend 24.9: (Vice Versa pt. 1) (Feat: HKGhost)

Spyro cried out as he placed a paw to his head. Something was already off about this loop. For one, there was the headache. This was not the first time he had awoken with a headache, but it was perhaps the first time that it felt like more than a simple headache. It felt less like a throbbing dull pressure on his temples, and more like a massive chunk had been torn painfully from his mind. It hurt. This was no simple dull pain, but a sharp, vivid pain that was still lancing through his head.

When Spyro opened his eyes and caught a glimpse of his surroundings, he discovered what else was off about this loop. He was in the Dragon Temple, not the swamp. He had to close his eyes again as the bright light sent lances of red pain through his head. It was so intense he couldn't hold in a whimper.

He felt a gentle nudge to his side, one that would have stirred him. It was instantly removed as a familiar booming voice sounded. "Step back. We do not know how he will react when he wakes."

Spyro recognised the voice easily. It was Terrador. He had a guess as to whom he was talking to.

"He could kill us all!" a higher pitched voice shouted. "You wanna know what he will do?! He'll do that!"

That was Sparx, Spyro was certain. But what was he talking about?

"Shut up," a feminine voice snapped. "Give the guy a chance. Neither of us may like it, but he's not any older than we are."

"We do not know that he will be violent when he wakes," a calmer, older voice said. Ignitus; Spyro would know that voice anywhere. "Neither do we know that he will be peaceful. He is only a child and after what he has been through, he will be very confused and scared."

What was Ignitus talking about? Spyro wondered confusedly. He should have been able to piece it together by now, but he couldn't. His head hurt too much.

Finally gathering the strength, Spyro removed his paws from his head and slowly opened his eyes. At first, he had to blink rapidly as his vision adjusted; that didn't help the massive headache he had, though. He let out a small whimper as the pain filled his head.

Looking around, he was shocked. They were in the training dojo in the middle of the Temple. Spyro immediately noticed that the Temple was in a much worse state of disrepair then any time he had seen it before. Not only were there chunks of stone missing, but signs of battle as well. Large spikes of ice stuck out from the walls and ground, the walls were scorched, and pieces of earth stuck out at odd angles.

Looking around, he saw the Guardians all in a wide circle around him. There was a very familiar black dragoness by Ignitus's side. Cynder. Poking his head out from behind her silver horns was a glowing yellow dragonfly; Sparx. That was strange. Usually, in loops where the two weren't supposed to know each other, Cynder would give a subtle hint to let him know she was awake; usually a smile or a wink. However, Cynder only looked down on him, then turned her nose up with a 'hmph.' Sparx was hiding and was obviously scared.

Slowly, Spyro felt something else. There was this air of hostility from everyone in the room. Ignitus looked down at Spyro with a concerned expression and was the only one who didn't emit this air of hostility, only sadness.

Spyro tried to rise to his feet, but immediately fell to the ground.

"Now, now, hold yourself, young one," Volteer rambled quickly. "We do not know what effects the corruption had on you or how long it will take for you to regain full use of your finer motor function. Currently we can tell you that all major wounds are healed but we have no idea about your psyche. Tell me, what do you remember?"

Volteer's quick words left Spyro's head spinning in confusion. What was he talking about? Corruption? What was that about? Something was nipping at Spyro's mind, trying to tell him something important. But the pain in his head prevented it from telling him. Spyro's moans of pain seemed to trigger Cyril.

"You are confusing him, you volt-brained dolt," the Ice Guardian sneered.

"Quiet," was the loud, simple rumble from Terrador. "Young dragon, tell me, what do you remember?"

Spyro remembered nothing at the moment. He hadn't realized it until now; he had no in-loop memories. His past in this obvious variant loop was completely blank.

"I-I don't—" Spyro managed to say in a weak voice. However, his mind decided that it was time to remember. He cried out in pain as all of his in-loop memories entered his mind at once. He saw his own purple paws bathed in blood as he tore into ranks upon ranks of dragons and moles. He saw apes following his every command. He saw himself defeat and imprison each of his mentors. He saw himself upon a lonely throne in the midst of a stormy land. He saw Cynder, a purple beam launching from her mouth and colliding with him. He remembered the name given to him: the Terror of the Skies.

Spyro cried out in pain as the memories dug into his head with jagged claws, rending his mind with pain and his soul with grief as he saw himself kill men, women and children with no mercy, and as he saw himself personally attack the Temple that was his home.

He collapsed to the ground, panting. Then, the true tragedy of the situation hit him. He looked around, seeing mixtures of pity, hostility and even traces of fear on the faces of his closest friends and allies. His tail curled around his body tightly and a shiver ran through him as he realized something.

Cynder, Sparx and Ignitus were all asleep this loop, and Spyro was the one who had terrorized the land.

For once, he was alone.

Fused 24.10:

Legend wasn't normally a dragon to get embarrassed by having to learn from others, especially if they were more knowledgeable on the subject than he was. Being trained by the guardians for several years, and far longer, considering the loops, it was something he had thought he had come to accept. However, he found it hard to look his latest 'mentor' in the eyes. It was much harder to not be embarrassed when said mentor was roughly his own age and height.

"So, let me get this straight…" Classic said, looking on with a flat glance at both Legend and Cynder. "Neither of you know how to swim?"

All three dragons were sitting outside the Spyros' house. Legend and Cynder exchanged awkward glances before Legend looked forward with a half-hearted grin. Classic blinked before shaking his head.

"But how?" he asked, his eyes wide. "I mean, even giving you the benefit of the doubt that your baseline prevented you from learning, I would think that, at least in the loops…"

Legend frowned. He had never really thought of it before, but his adventures had never really needed him to traverse water. Either the bodies of water he found were either too shallow or short for him to even bother, or he could just fly over it, which was much quicker.

Even in variants, traveling in water wasn't really something he'd had to do. It really hadn't been until a loop or so ago, where he and Cynder had decided to go for a swim as a short reprieve from their baseline, that they'd realized that neither one knew how to in the first place.

Legend shook his head, looking on with a sheepish grin. "Regardless, would you teach us now? I remember you saying something about how you can swim, so…"

"I don't know…" Classic said with a smirk. "You're always going on about how important it is to listen to your mentors. Are you sure you want to take advice from someone who just views them as old farts?"

Legend scowled, letting out a low growl. Despite coming to accept each other despite their disagreements, Classic's blatant disrespect for his elders was one thing Legend could never get over. If it weren't for the fact that Ignitus was usually too busy keeping the other guardians in line even while awake, he would have asked him to teach them. Sighing, Legend looked at Classic flatly.

"We don't really have much of a choice," he said.

"Well, gee, I'm flattered," Classic said, rolling his eyes. Shaking the comment off, he looked at his loop brother sternly. "In any case, I suppose I can't just let my bro run around not knowing how to do something I can do, so consider it your lucky day." Classic placed a claw to his chin, looking from Legend to Cynder. "First off… Can either of you two breathe underwater?"

Both dragons could only blink in response.

"Wait… You can?" Cynder asked, tilting her head.

"Well, yeah," Classic said, as though it was no big deal. "Not sure if it's common to all the dragons of my universe, though, or if it's just

part of the twenty-something powers purple dragons apparently possess."

Legend looked on blankly before raising an eyebrow. "Wait, how did you figure that out?"

"I just jumped into water and found out I could breathe it," Classic said, tilting his head. "Why?"

"Hold on!" Legend exclaimed, his eyes going wide as he stared at his loop brother. "Do you mean to tell me that, even before the loops started, you jumped into a pool of water, opened your mouth to take a breath, and found out you could breathe it!?"

"Well…yeah," Classic said, looking on blankly. "Why is it such a big deal?"

"Weren't you afraid that you'd drown!?"

"Not really. I had someone watching over me when I was testing that. Granted, he was an extreme cheapskate."

Legend could only stare blankly as his loop brother just gave him a confused glance. He knew Classic could be reckless, but…

"So…can you?" Classic asked, placing a claw to his chin.

"...I don't know, and I'd rather not risk my well-being to find out," Legend stated flatly.

"Why? You technically can't die in the loops, so…"

An awkward silence filled the air as Legend and Cynder looked at Classic with wide eyes. Classic scratched the back of his neck, letting out an uneasy laugh.

"...Hold on, I have an idea!" he said before quickly rushing back into the house.

Several moments passed. Legend and Cynder exchanged awkward glances as they waited for Classic to return. Not long after he rushed in, he came rushing back out carrying a cup of water in his paws. Legend raised an eyebrow as Classic walked over to him, placing the cup of water on his head. Legend glanced up at the cup before looking at Classic.

"...And this is?"

"The test I was thinking of."

Legend looked on blankly. "...How is this a test?"

"Well, you're breathing under water, aren't you?"

Legend's expression went flat and he scowled at Classic's grinning face, all the while aware of a certain ebony dragoness chuckling in the background.

(A/N: Oh boy, all the arcs. Not sure how so many started up in this chapter. Spyro stories in general tend to be more story focused, so maybe that has something to do with it. Who knows.

Either way, for those who follow my profile page, I've been replaying A New Beginning to refresh my memories of it, as well as give me some more material to work with. I've already gotten a lot of ideas for comedic Legend-based snips so far, though now I'm having a hard time coming up with Classic-based snips. Funny how that works out, huh. XP

Either way, expect more episodic chapters like this soon. We've mostly been focusing on trying to get the current mega-arc done so as to move onto the next one, but I know there are probably a lot more readers who prefer the episodic loop-based stories as opposed to mega arcs.

Anyways, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and if you have any ideas for snips you want to see, or want to add your own snips to the compilation, make sure to check out the Spyro loops Forum on FF.N.

Snip comments:

24.1: GLaDOS would likely have a field day.

24.2: All I can say is, Classic would likely not have survived the Innortal era of the loops if that's his first response.

24.3: Was a bit worried this loop might offend a few people. Just like to say right now that we had no intention of offending anyone, and sorry if we did.

24.4: Alright, who named the file name of this loop 'X&BUTT'?

24.5: You know, one thing I like about the loops is the fact that it's episodic. If people don't like a particular loop, they can skip over it and go on to the next one. This allows me to do things like intense character study, in-depth character development, funny character interactions...

And stupid arcs where I felt like writing some action with Godzilla characters in it. /shot

/There's also a reason why I'm having Legend Spyro learn French. I'm curious to see how many Spyro fans figure it out./

24.6: Ironically, by the time I started writing this, I actually did get sick myself.

24.7: If we really wanted to point out the easy route, we could ponder why Spyro simply didn't fly over most of the enemies he encountered. Game design is a funny thing like that.

24.8: Classic certainly seems confident in himself that he can send these robots to the scrap yard. Is it really going to be that

simple, though? Or will it prove harder than he thought? Only time will tell.

24.9: I suppose this was an eventual possibility in the loops. On the bright side, this might mean cool shadow powers and the like.

24.10: Not sure if this counts as a pun or not. Either way, someone should really punish Classic for that. /shot)

Dreams of the past (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

(Fused 1.1 continued) (Feat; Toko, Ukelele, AbZ)

Over the past couple of weeks, Ripto had been given pieces of background information on the dragon that now had a leash on his brain. He wasn't sure how much of it was true, though, given that Malefor was very rarely in anything approaching what one might call 'a right state of mind.' Having to play nursemaid to such a powerful creature had not helped his disposition, nor had the fact that, since Malefor didn't truly sleep, Ripto had been forced to stay awake for just as long. At this point, nearly the only thing that was keeping him going was Malefor's magic, tying him ever closer to the beast that he despised.

The closest Malefor ever got to sleeping was when his eyes would half-close and, more often than not, he'd start humming the tune of a serene and peaceful song, perhaps a lullaby that he had heard as a whelp and couldn't fully remember. Not that Ripto really cared, except for the annoying fact that it also dashed his closest chance to sleep. Not to mention that, when he 'woke up,' things would probably not be pretty.

Had Ripto been able to see into Malefor's admittedly addled mind and make sense of it—no small task—he might have better understood the dragon's agitation.

A slender pale-purple silhouette meandered onto the stage of a large empty theater. He recognized this place; it was a concert hall his warden would take him to whenever he managed a streak of 'good behavior.' Here, he could enjoy fantastical stories that distracted from the reality of his prison-like existence. It was here that he had

first heard the song that continued to strike him with romantic nostalgia and nauseating horror.

"This was a triumph. I'm making a note here: huge success..."

Malefor recognized the voice; it belonged to the 'Administrator' and 'Head Scientist,' the one the others called the 'Great Sea Dragon.' He had once called her 'Mother.' By the time he had been enrolled as a test subject, Malefor had had other names for her, but saying those usually resulted in extra 'Enrichment Time.'

"We do what we must because we can," the voice continued.

Malefor felt his fury rise and searched the orchestra pit for the offending musicians. To his extreme aggravation, the music got louder and there were no instruments to be seen. He did his best to cover his ears, but the song chose to sound out of his arms instead.

As soon as Malefor raised his arms, he crumpled to the floor as if his muscles had turned to gelatine. Slowly, and in unholy terror, he was raised up like a limp marionette and placed on top of an operating table. There, his head was pulled up so he could clearly gawk at the masked, sterile serpent in scrubs who stood before him. The surgeon's lips moved in sync with the lyrics, yet all Malefor could hear by now was the contralto of the mother figure he had rejected.

"...till alive. And believe me I'm still alive. ...Still alive."

Brandishing scalpels and syringes between each of his claws, the stoic specialist ignored cries of pain as he tore Malefor's flesh to ribbons, inserting a dubious liquid into the gouges he carved into his victim's body.

Suddenly, and without warning, the theater and the surgeon disappeared in a blinding light, leaving Malefor floating in a black void. As he prayed that this would be the end of his restless vision, a flickering light sporadically illuminated his surroundings. On the other side of the corridor, he could see a gallery of giant vials containing

specimens that ranged from single body-parts to undeveloped fetuses. One of the tanks caught his eye, for there, suspended in the mysterious solution, were his wings, shrivelling up as they absorbed the liquid.

Thrashing his neck backward to confirm the absence of his aerial appendages, he instinctively opened his mouth to scream. All that came out was a strangled gurgle as he inhaled the fluid and, upon drowning, finally escaped his feverish vision.

Malefor's eyes snapped open, his vision unfocused. As everything slowly returned to clarity, his gaze darted every which way, checking his surroundings. Finally, he pointed both of his abnormally large pupils at the filthy window to his side. Night time.

It was extremely difficult for him to regain his bearings on a daily cycle, even after a month, considering that there had been no progression of day within his spork prison. Shuddering at this thought, Malefor glanced at his friend and caretaker. Ripto was also awake, a firm scowl planted on his face.

"Are you ever going to sleep?" he complained to his captor. "As much as I'd like to, I sort of can't because you insist on keeping my mind under your claw, even when you're nodding off and singing that stupid song."

"Please forgive me. Maybe we could arrange time for you to rest. I am incapable of sleep."

"Yeah, I noticed."

At this moment, Malefor clutched at a rotten apple from the stash Ripto had accumulated for him and requested comfort. "Ripto, read to me."

Groaning, Ripto retrieved a book from the small library he had been forced to build up due to Malefor's interest in the history of the

Dragon Realms. From what he could tell, Malefor had never been taught to read and wanted to catch up on current events. Grabbing a slightly out-of-date newspaper, Ripto read to him an article.

"Disaster at the Central Park. On Tuesday, June 11, a field of lava inexplicably invaded the courtyard at the northern sector. All witnesses could not discern a culprit or a cause, and all tests that checked for magic signatures yielded nothing beyond normal background noise. Police are still investigating, but there have been no breakthroughs so far." Ripto looked toward Malefor, who had stopped chewing the overly slimy fruit.

After a moment of silence, Malefor swallowed his meal with an audible gulp, without so much as a gag. "Explainable."

Ripto raised an eyebrow. "What?"

"This incident is explainable. This happened recently?"

"Yeah, though it's kind of stale news, seeing as it happened about a few weeks ago. Why do you ask?"

"We will go to this park. Now."

By now, Ripto had learned not to argue lest his mind be twisted to Malefor's command. "Fine. Crazy hag."

Malefor ignored this slight. Friendship did not come easily, and forcing someone to say, "I'm your friend," just wasn't the same as hearing it from their own willpower.

Donning his black cloak, Ripto stuffed his wand in the inner pocket and climbed out the open window. "Come on, let's get it over with, and don't think about camping there tonight. The police'll have a cow."

With that, Malefor snaked out of the window and quickly gained a hold on the ledge above it. Taking point, Ripto ambled up the wall,

clambering over the edge of the roof at the end of his climb. Malefor didn't fall behind; thanks to his lengthy limbs, he was able to cover much distance in a single bound.

They stood in the moonlight as Ripto analyzed a suitable path to take across the rooftops. It was most likely the early hours of morning. Most civilians wouldn't be awake at this time—a blessing—but whatever Malefor wanted to do at the park, it would have to be quick. Ripto turned and motioned for him to follow.

Under their paws, concrete, air, shingles and wind flew by, their journey nostalgic of their first arrival to Ripto's shanty of an apartment. Bounding off structural springboards, the raptor and the dragon finally landed on the crown of the colonnade that shaded the park below. Using his cloak as a parachute, Ripto floated to the ground, while Malefor spiraled down the column and just as silently landed on the concrete floor.

"We have thirty minutes, tops. Most cops aren't awake at this time, but there'll be some crackpots still excited over the whole lava business, I bet."

"Understood. Alert me if anyone comes. I do not wish to be seen."

So, Ripto stood guard as Malefor commenced his investigation. Deep in his blackened heart, Malefor felt a primordial fear. If his hunch was correct, the Waterians had definitely survived in some form. The job he'd started would be incomplete and they may have spread further than ever.

Malefor pushed these horrifying thoughts to the side and let his element flow through his body. His eyes had a strong interior glow, though the slits of his pit-like pupils were still clearly visible. His ruined frills stood on end as he came across an area that reeked of a singularity made from Convexity. The dissonant, unpredictable frequencies that rang from the location where reality used to be

infinitely curled into a single point caused Malefor to shrink back in horror.

Whoever had done this had most likely originated from a bloodline that led straight to the sea serpents: the abominations that had forced Convexity into his body and proceeded to incessantly extract biological samples from him in order to grant themselves dominion over the element. If they weren't extinct, then where could they have gone? Malefor needed more information; he had to find out what had become of his tormentors after he'd supposedly decimated them.

"I am finished for now. Ripto, we will investigate this further with information from the 'library' that you speak of. If my prediction is right, we are all in danger."

At this, Ripto stared at his capter, watching him pale increasingly despite his already sickly scale-color. He didn't think much of the incident; it was just desserts for the dragons, in his view. But if Malefor, the most potent being he knew of at the moment, was afraid of whatever he'd found here, then Ripto had to pay attention. It could be a bargaining chip in disguise, or it could be the end of all he knew.

Legend was tapping away at that piece of junk again. Under normal circumstances, Classic would have peeked over his shoulder to see what he was writing, but that usually resulted in a raised wing blocking his view. On top of that, Ember was visiting again for magic lessons. Apparently her father was a Magic Crafter, so she had some natural affinity when it came to the subject. For now, though, it was mostly going to be basic stuff to start her off, so no teleportation and the like. Lucky for Classic, he didn't have to worry about alarming his loop parents by teaching her, as Red had apparently taught him before summer break in this loop's universe. It actually did them both proud that their son was trying to retain what he'd learned.

Despite his parents' pride, it still irked Classic that everyone else and their mother was better at drawing runes than him.

"You know, I could give you drawing lessons if you want," Ember said in her most innocent voice.

Anyone else would have found her delivery of the offer adorable and well-intentioned. However, Classic knew all too well when she was trying to push his buttons. With a flat glance, he gave a solemn reply. "I have a command line, thank you very much. I'm only sticking to this stuff 'cause you're an absolute beginner."

Ember stuck her tongue out, giving a wink. "You sure? It'd only cost two gems a lesson. Usually it would be five, but I'll give you a discount since you really need it."

"Oh right, 'cause you're the master of drawing shapes in the air." At this, Classic couldn't resist having some fun, bowing mockingly at her. "All hail Princess Polygon!"

A well-hidden urge to giggle finally broke Ember's composure, and both dragons shared a bout of laughter. Legend, on the other paw, wasn't too pleased with the disturbance, as he was struggling to decide how to end his current paragraph. Before he could raise his voice, however, he was intercepted with an idea formed from his current understanding of his brother. When he was given a challenge, Classic would never hesitate to focus on a goal. If Legend could distract his twin and Ember, he would certainly be rewarded with a decent duration of silence.

As Legend scoured his small library for a specific book, Ember wiped a tear from her eye. It felt so good to be close to her hero, even if they weren't snuggling together like the lovebirds she had once imagined them to be. Classic was definitely a stubborn blockhead from what she had seen throughout the course of their friendship, but to her that was just another endearing quality. He may not have been—and might never be—ready for a deeper relationship, but their current status as friends was a great improvement from their previous game of 'cat-and-mouse.'

"Hey, Spy! Do you and Ember have a moment? I have a little... *proposition* for you two."

Classic and Ember glanced back at Legend, who was holding a spellbook in his claws.

"I bought this book a few weeks ago when I learned how to teleport. I never got around to reading it, though, since I had more than a few volumes of comics to get through. If you want, I can let you guys keep it. I think Ember would get the most use out of it, though, considering Spy's, you know, *disability* ." He made sure to enunciate the last word for his brother.

Scoffing at this slight, Classic retorted, "Hand it over, Ro. Before you finish your shameless fan-fiction, Ember and I will be drawing the Draga Lisa, no sweat."

Legend didn't know what 'fan-fiction' was, nor the 'Draga Lisa,' but he did know what his brother and Ember were up to: trouble.

"I would ask what you two are doing," Legend said, not bothering to glance up from his current paragraph, "but your giggles are letting me know that, whatever it is, it won't end well."

"Ro, shut up!" Classic snapped back in a harsh whisper, his and Ember's heads hanging out of the window.

He retrieved another object to experiment with—a ceramic mug that had once resided on his desk—and handed it to Ember, who had recently cast a reflect spell on the pathway that went through the front yard. Some of the lighter objects had made it past the fence and they were aiming to get one of their projectiles across the street.

Before Ember let the container fly, her conscience sprang at her, pleading her not to go through with this. Under normal circumstances, she would have heeded it, but something about Classic egging her on made it hard for her to resist. Against her

better judgment, she threw the cup to the cement below and it rebounded in a glorious arc. Both dragons cheered and high-pawed as its shadow sped over the opposing sidewalk, but their celebration was cut short by the sound of shattering glass.

"MY LEG!"

At this shout of pain, Classic almost shut the window on their necks in his haste. He and Ember hyperventilated in apprehension, while Legend looked up from his paper to glare at them. All he'd wanted was a respite from his brother's antics, and this was the result. One way or another, Classic always found a way to stir up trouble.

The concert hall again. Malefor decided that staying in the seating area would be the best bet to avoid triggering his personal demons, but he didn't have high hopes for a tranquil dream. Upon the stage, props were arranged in a pattern that he recognized as his room. His 'habitation module,' the warden would say, but damn it all, it was his room. There was the button to let visitors in, the window where he would peer out into the endless sea floor, and the chute where his food was spat out in an impeccable rhythm. It wasn't much, but it was the only thing he'd ever owned, more or less.

An adolescent earth dragon hid in a corner, his wings curiously absent. The only evidence of their presence were two fresh scars, bright red in contrast to his verdant scales. Knocks sounded from the door. The warden was back, and the dragon let a weak yet defiant puff of smoke out of his snout.

"Pete, open the door, would you kindly? We have more tests for you."

The green whelp knew that there were more trials for him to endure and that there was no point in refusing, but he made no move toward the button regardless. He couldn't lock the door from the inside, and he couldn't escape the cell to swim through miles of ocean. There

was nothing to do, nothing more to see, other than the sea serpents and their foul experiments.

The door slid open to reveal a lithe creature that stood on just two of its legs. Its bleached skin glistened like slime and, in its webbed claws, it held a tablet and stylus. How it managed to twist its claws to do such a thing, the green whelp had no desire to know. What he did have a desire for was its head on a silver platter.

The sea serpent walked toward him and noticed the murderous intent in his eyes. "Please, don't be upset. You've had good behavior lately and, if you pass these next tests, we have a wonderful surprise for you."

At this, Pete snapped back. "Is it something I can use to put a dent through your skull?"

"Well, why would you want such a thing? You are contributing so much through your participation at the Waterian Research Facility. It would be a shame for you to regress to the ways of the simpletons and beasts on the surface."

Attempting to intimidate the serpent with a furious stare, Pete eventually gave up and grudgingly trudged from his only safe haven to the warden's side.

The transparent floor clinked under their paws as the duo walked past the rest of the habitation modules. This segment of the facility was meant for housing 'participants.' Pete was the only one of his kind, as far as he had seen. He saw other specimens weeping and muttering prayers for salvation from outside the observation panels. They didn't last long and it was normal to see a new face every other week.

He had often wondered why he had lasted so long in a place like this. For as long as he could remember, he had been a 'favorite' among the serpents. He was even allowed to interact with their young on 'Bring Your Spawn for Testing Day,' although it was horribly

unnerving to hear the children discussing the latest implants and experiments. It was almost as if they were full-grown from the egg.

The warden interrupted Pete's ruminations as he tried to console the dragon. "Now then, I understand that you deeply resent the loss of your wings. Be assured that it won't last forever. For you see, it turns out that your...biological similarities to our species marks you as a perfect candidate for our most esteemed, advanced program."

It was here that Pete's fuse was blown. "I'm not a dragon anymore, you damn dirty snake! You took my wings, my body, and you won't stop at my sanity either! You should kill me right now if you had a brain, because I swear I'll—"

"You'll what? Force me to follow standard protocol for uncooperative test subjects?"

Pete's threat was cut short, for it had lost all credibility a long time ago. He had once attempted to resist a 'Behavioral Correction Assistant,' a creature that rose from the surrounding materials at a sea serpent's command. After a pathetic display of his meager control over earth, he had been rewarded with four broken legs and countless cuts and bruises. Pete knew that, for right now, challenging a mass of glass, metal and stone was foolhardy, and there was no way they would kill him when the Facility wanted him alive.

"Now, let's put those angry thoughts aside, Pete. I'll tell you right now that you'll get your wings back and much more if you are willing to cooperate."

"…More?" Pete ventured warily.

"Yes, we've greatly appreciated you volunteering your wings so that we could develop a newly discovered element. The research group called it 'Convexity,' I believe."

Convexity. Pete let this word rattle around in his mind, as well as the new opportunities this development presented to him. The sea serpents refused to teach him how to use his natural element, but would they resist teaching him an element of their own design? As long as he followed along and put on a smile, the serpents would be none the wiser, letting him perfect his skills. Then, once their guard dropped, their blood would spill...

"Pete?"

The devious glint in his eyes disappeared as soon as he heard the warden. "Uh, what?"

"I said, we plan to introduce this element to our younglings if you manage to demonstrate stable control over it."

This, Pete would not allow. For too long, the Waterians had stolen from him. Now it was his turn to steal something, and if one of those slimy bastards wanted to use this new element, they would pay with their lives. Of course, Pete made no mention of his designs and faked a defeated expression as he responded. "Alright then. When I do this for you guys, can I stop doing the experiments?"

"It depends…" the serpent mused, directing a glare straight at Malefor in the seats.

This breaking of the fourth wall startled the purple dragon in the audience and, before he could realize he was still dreaming, the stage bent in on itself and reformed into a titan of wood and metal.

Scrambling to what he remembered as the exit, Malefor attempted to break down the door, but to no avail. Slamming his horns against it, he left nary a scratch and so he cowered, awaiting his fate.

Nothing. Malefor cautiously craned his neck to see if the terror had left. The last thing he saw was a giant mechanical limb and a flash of white.

Malefor gasped into consciousness with a disorienting ringing in his ears. Sitting up, he looked down at his paled scales, attempting to remember the shade of purple they had become when the Waterians had reattached his deformed, elementally tainted wings. Time may have bleached them, but Convexity would always be his prized possession. It was his trophy, a symbol of his victory over his oppressors, and the basis for his waning sanity. After his defeat within the spork, it was the only thing he had left.

Another day, and Sparx was still hiding out at Hunter's apartment. It wasn't that he didn't want to spend time with his baseline bro; he'd have loved to hang out with him after spending so much time away from him this loop. However, his twin from another world would likely be with him too, which meant there was a high chance of the other Sparx also being there. That alone was enough reason for him to reconsider spending time with his bro.

Sparx looked over at Ihy and found the Admin unconscious at two in the afternoon. Whether it was from lack of sleep or because his liver had finally demanded to the brain that it knock the Admin out so that it could catch up on removing the toxins, Sparx had no idea. Considering that the sun was directly shining on Ihy's closed eyelids and he wasn't even twitching, he was well and truly out of it. Though, given that the laptop's screen was just as bright as before, he probably hadn't been out long...

There was probably no harm in seeing what Ihy had been up to all day on that thing, Sparx mused. He'd probably not understand it anyway, or it would just be racy pictures or something. Or he was ordering more alcohol. That was probably it. Whatever the case, his curiosity would be satisfied.

So Sparx flitted around behind Ihy's place on the couch, which had a new dent since he'd been sitting there for so long. Much to his surprise, it was none of the things he had suspected—in fact, Ihy was working on an email. Sparx couldn't see most of what he was

sending, if only because it seemed, at the moment he'd passed out, he had been in the middle of a Copy-Paste in the CC/BCC section.

The email which he was coping the sender's address from, however, was completely visible and, to Sparx's surprise, in a language that he could read.

"Administrator Ihy,

While investigations into your gross misconduct in regards to the Legend Dragon Realms have found you innocent of negligence and, indeed, seem to support your argument that your actions have increased anchor—and thus loop—stability, the manner in which you subverted our appeal system, and the nature of the matter dealt with, remain firmly within the grounds of unacceptability.

The nature of your offense, altering the Legend Baseline so that a then possible looper might be able to evade the circumstances of her childhood, was not in danger of threatening Yggdrasil or even crashing the Legend Loops, but to wantonly spend such precious amounts of Yggdrasil's remaining power on a frivolous endeavor must be met with punishment.

However, it must be granted that, in this case, your gamble has paid off in full. For this reason alone, your rights as an Administrator shall not be fully revoked.

However, your pay shall be cut, your hours and the number of loops you must manage have increased, and all actions taken through your workplace terminal shall be monitored for a period of time, which we shall not disclose. In addition, a black mark has been added to your resume and, should anything like this happen again, you will be relieved of your position.

Horus, Supervisor of the Egyptian Pantheon"

Backing away quietly, Sparx frowned. This email, which he probably shouldn't have seen, answered some of his bother's very pointed

questions that had evaded a response until now. But it didn't leave Sparx with a quick answer as to what he was supposed to do with what he had learned.

There was much information squirreled away in this stronghold, Malefor observed. It was imperative, in his judgement, to move his home into the recesses of this citadel of knowledge. So far, he and his accomplice had avoided detection by hiding in the numerous storage rooms, and the 'cafe' that resided near the front entrance was a readily available source of fresh warm sustenance.

Even though he could not read, diagrams and graphs were still able to captivate him, and one fateful night he had come across a discovery that could be considered a lead in his investigation. Day and night, wherever there was solitude to be found, Malefor forced Ripto to translate the symbols on the pages of a massive book titled 'Genealogy of the Dragon Realms,' its cover depicting a plaque that resembled the leader of the dreaded sea serpents. Unfortunately this morning, Malefor's dominion over Ripto's mind could not hold against the siege of drowsiness and the orange raptor finally won his crusade for sleep, leaving Malefor stranded at page one thousand two hundred and thirty-one.

He simply watched as Ripto's dictation of the textbook transitioned into delirious murmurs. "Cosmos of the Magic Crafters, born year... One million gem bail... Plea bargain... " Ripto snored between his soft ramblings. "...No, please, I saved her, your honor... ...I'll take the jail time, just don't charge the bail..."

Listening to his companion's unconscious admissions, Malefor was reminded of 'trials in the court of law,' one of the many subjects he had discovered during his stay at the library. He made a note to question his partner later and proceeded to hide him away in the storage closet. As he closed the door and sat in front of the unfinished volume on the desk, Malefor was startled by a young voice.

"Who are you?"

Immediately, his eyes shot up toward the source of this disturbance. A crimson-colored copy of the green whelp from his visions was peering out from behind the corner with an impressed look on his face. He made no hesitation to walk toward Malefor as he gushed, "You look just like those pale guys that abduct people! You know, 'cause you have those really dark eyes and you're so freakin' tall! Are you a space dragon?"

Malefor had no words. He would have expected the small dragon to alert the authorities of his presence, but this child appeared to have no intention of doing so.

"It's OK if you are. Lots of people don't think they exist and some think aliens are evil, but if they were, why would they abduct people and then put them back?" The red dragon tilted his head quizzically in response to Malefor's silence. "You don't understand me, do you?"

It was here that Malefor chose to respond. His first friendship wasn't going too smoothly, and this fellow dragon had high regards for him already. "No, I understand you."

The other dragon was taken aback by his cracked and distorted voice, but he dismissed it, considering it a biological nuance of an otherworldly being. "Oh, that's cool. Sorry, if I offended ya."

"I am not offended. What is your name?"

"Flame, and yours?"

"Malefor. Would you be my friend, Flame?"

Flame was rather confused at this extraterrestrial's benevolence. He half-expected to be whisked away into a spaceship and strapped to an observation table, like the stories said. However, the expression on its face displayed a deep melancholy. Perhaps it was lonely; maybe it was the last remaining member of an endangered

civilization from the stars. Flame took pity and sat next to the strange being.

"Yeah, sure. So, were you trying to read about the Dragon Realms?" he asked, looking down at the giant text before them.

"I cannot read. I have another friend who was reading this to me, but he is unavailable."

"I could teach you how to read, if you want."

Malefor could barely believe his ears; Ripto had never offered him this. "I...don't know what to say."

"You don't have to thank me, I do consider myself an advocate for the paranormal," Flame said with a proud smile. To think, he could be the first dragon to teach an alien how to read! "Let me get a pen and paper. I'll show ya all you need to know!"

With that, he ran off to retrieve said materials. Malefor looked on wistfully with the full knowledge that Flame was extremely lucky to live such a carefree life. Maybe he, too, could learn to live like this, just as soon as he had solved the mystery at the park.

"I'm back!"

Flame returned propelling himself on a swivel chair, his writing supplies in his lap. The first thing that Malefor noticed was Flame's odd position. Had he sat like a normal dragon should, he wouldn't have been able to push himself forward with his hind paws. Instead, the whelp was sitting like... No, no, that was impossible. Malefor chose to push these thoughts out of his mind. It was just an odd quirk, nothing more.

As Flame came to a stop in front of the desk, he placed a piece of paper on top of it and started his lesson. "Alright, so let me write out the alphabet here. You're gonna need it."

As Flame grasped the pen, Malefor witnessed something vile and unnatural. One of Flame's claws had twisted in the opposite direction, allowing him to hold the utensil securely. An image of scissors flashed over Flame's paw, and Malefor froze in complete terror. He remembered in great detail the surgical tools, knives, syringes, and scalpels—they were all held in that exact manner within the sea serpents' claws. The book's cover held far more significance than Malefor had imagined, and reading was now a non-issue.

Flame had barely finished writing the twenty-first symbol when Malefor spoke, attempting to keep his nausea in check. "F-Flame."

"Yeah?"

"I apologize, but I have a question. Who is that on the cover of this book?" Folding the book over, Malefor pointed toward the plaque.

"That's the Great Sea Dragon," answered Flame matter-of-factly.

Malefor once again lost whatever color he had in his scales. "Why is...she in this book?"

"Well, it is said that the dragons came from the sea and the Great Sea Dragon carried her children on her back, taking them to land so they could grow and prosper. But that's a myth, so I'm not sure if it's very accurate. I do believe, though, that we have relations to water-based creatures since we can survive a pretty long time underwater. In fact, every kid learns to swim before they learn to fly."

Silence fell between the two dragons. The lack of noise grew uncomfortable and Flame voiced his concern. "Are you alright?"

Malefor continued to stare forward, his mind preoccupied with a revolting conclusion. He needed a second opinion, someone to tell him that this was a ridiculous idea. "Flame, please listen. Imagine that, a long, long time ago, a great disaster caused a society under the sea to fall apart. Few survivors were left. These survivors

escaped to land and successfully reproduced with the inhabitants, causing a new species to arise. Would it be crazy if I said that dragons were this new species?"

Considering this theory against what he already knew, Flame said, "It would certainly explain the sea dragon myths, our affinity for water, and the undersea ruins off Dragon Shores. But what kind of disaster would cause the survivors to move that far? Were they afraid of something?"

Malefor lowered his head, now convinced that his theory was sound. "I am the disaster. I made them fear me."

Flame was now thoroughly bewildered. "...What?! How old are you, exactly?"

"I was sealed away after the Waterians suffered my vengeance. It cannot be determined how many years I have existed. But to think, their lineage, my bastard children, soiled my kind for generations to come?!" Drops began to fall down Malefor's face. "It's just not fair..."

Flame didn't fully understand what Malefor was going on about, but he felt guilty, believing that he had caused him to cry. "Hey, no! Don't cry, it's OK..." He reached his paw toward the weeping entity.

The limb never reached its destination. By some miracle, Flame suddenly found himself some distance away from Malefor, who now glared though his tears, his eyes glowing. Flame swore that he hadn't walked backwards and he tried to move toward Malefor again.

"Leave."

This time, Flame observed the room around him warping and stretching, creating more space between him and Malefor. He didn't know what was happening, but the more he walked toward Malefor, the further and further away he became. Now the small office had transformed into a long corridor and Flame decided that, if this alien could perform such a feat, it wasn't out of the question that he could

bring down an entire civilization like he had claimed. With that, Flame rushed out, hoping that he hadn't incurred the creature's wrath and electing to keep this close encounter of the third kind to himself.

Ceasing the flow of Convexity within him, Malefor released his control over space and the hallway reformed into the compact office it had been before. By now, he was livid. "How could I let this happen?" Malefor whispered to himself. "The sea serpents live and I am now the ancestor of countless descendants. What can I do? The planet is ruled by hybrid scum; true dragons are a rarity."

As his tirade continued, Malefor curled into a fetal position and rocked back and forth. His twisted mind magicked up vile, atrocious designs. The conclusion was inescapable: to save the dragon race, his contaminated descendants must be terminated, and pure, true dragons needed to be found. And how would he accomplish this feat?

The portal transit.

If he could cripple the realms' main form of long-distance travel and communication, there would be no resistance to his attacks, and the only option would be to see reason and sacrifice for the good of all true dragons. And this time, no survivors would be left. Malefor would not make that mistake again.

He opened the closet to find Ripto still sound asleep. Hoisting the raptor onto his back, Malefor crept into the emergency stairway, another refuge he had found in the library, and proceeded to scale the steps until he reached an escape hatch. Opening the small door, he snaked onto the roof and searched the city below for a place to stay. First, Ripto would rest, and then Malefor would return to Convexity to prepare and execute his final solution to the Waterian epidemic.

Sweat dripped from Ember's forehead as she stood firm, facing the training dummy. She frowned, a determined glint in her eyes, and took a deep breath, her wings beginning to glow. With a swift move, she launched her wings forward, causing a wave of blue energy to engulf the test dummy and sending it tumbling back. Ember stumbled a bit as she struggled to keep steady. As she straightened up, a whistle sounded.

"Not bad," Classic said, walking over to her. "You've only just started using chi and already you're close to my level at it."

Ember glanced at him, managing to smile despite her lack of energy. "Thanks."

Classic smirked, sitting down next to her. It felt odd to be training the same dragoness that used to cause him to run for the hills every time he saw even the tiniest glimpse of pink, but it actually wasn't too bad. Though Ember had agreed to stop self-training in order to join the dojo, the dojo didn't teach Dragon Kata this loop. As such, he had decided to uphold his promise—though they had to train on one of the far off plains away from the city so Ember's mother wouldn't catch them.

"Don't push yourself too hard, though. As I said, you only just started learning Dragon Kata and that's on top of all the other things you're trying to learn."

Ember sighed, lowering her head and closing her eyes. "I know. It's just..." She shook her head. "I just want to be ready to defend myself from anything. If I'm cowering in fear from a mugger, I can only imagine what would happen if the loops threw something like the Sorcerer at me."

Classic frowned slightly, placing a paw on Ember's shoulder. "Hey, don't think like that," he said, lowering his head to make eye contact with her. "You managed to get through my first three adventures before you even knew how to head-butt properly, right?"

"I suppose," Ember said, lifting her head slightly. "Mostly it was through sheer dumb luck, though. I still can't believe the Sorceress got her wand stuck in one of the tiles when one of Agent 9's rogue shots fired it right out of her hand." She giggled.

"I can believe that. Agent 9 has always been pretty random, even in the loops," Classic said, placing a paw on his forehead. "That guy has so many triggers to cause him to go off the rails it's insane. If I even so much as *blink* at the wrong moment, he ends up doing something different from baseline."

"Imagine if he was looping," Ember said, raising her head. "I may have only met him for a brief moment, but I can't help but get the feeling his first thought would be that the rhynocs are behind the loops."

"Yeah, that sounds like him alright," Classic said, chuckling.

He took a deep breath and an awkward silence fell upon them as they looked towards the setting sun. Classic sighed, dropping his gaze and closing his eyes. Noticing this, Ember raised an eyebrow.

"You okay, Spyro?" she asked, ducking her head to look him in the eyes.

"Huh? Yeah, why?" Classic asked, raising his head and glancing over to her.

"I don't know. You just seem...depressed all of a sudden," Ember said, giving him a concerned look.

"What? Me, depressed? Come on now," Classic said, putting on a half-hearted grin as he turned away. "That's...ridiculous..."

Ember narrowed her eyes. She could tell Classic was lying and she was determined to get him to spill what was troubling him. "Spyro, I know things are still a bit weird between us, but we *are* friends. If something's bugging you, I'm here to listen."

He paused, glancing over at her wide blue eyes. Classic blinked before looking back down and closing his eyes again, sighing.

"...Remember what happened early on this loop? The thing we've been trying to cover up?" Classic said, making sure no one else was around to hear them.

"Yeah?" Ember asked, lowering her voice.

Classic took a deep breath and met her eyes . "...Do you think I 'lucked' into my adventures?"

"Huh?" Ember asked, staring blankly at him.

Classic shook his head. "Ro said it when he was...not in the best mindset." He looked up at the sky. "He went on a rant about how there were no true heroes in the realms, just people who lucked into it, be it good or bad luck."

"But...that's silly. You chose to help everyone and be a hero."

"That's what I thought," Classic said, lowering his head. "But the more I thought about it, the more I realized how I tended to luck into my adventures. Being the only dragon who wasn't turned into stone, the dragon who went through a portal at the right time, the only dragon small enough to fit through the rabbit hole..." He sighed, shaking his head. "I know I shouldn't let this get to me because, like I said, Ro wasn't in the best mindset, but..."

As Classic went silent, Ember hesitated and took a moment to collect her thoughts. She had never seen her Spyro like this before. He was always so confident and snarky. Maybe it was because she had never hung out with him like this before but, regardless, she wasn't going to let him put himself down like this.

"Okay... So what?"

"Huh?"

"So what if it was some dumb luck that got you to go on your adventures?" Ember said, looking Classic in the eyes. "That doesn't change the fact that you stood up when people needed saving."

"Yeah, but..." Classic lowered his head again. "Being a hero was a thing I loved. The idea that I didn't choose to be one, and that it was only luck that all that happened..."

Ember frowned as Classic trailed off and seemed to curl up into himself. She closed her eyes and shook her head before looking at her hero with a determined stare.

"Spyro, listen to me," she said, placing her paw on Classic's cheek to make him look back at her. "Think about it this way. Even if it was luck that brought you there, you still chose to be a hero. You didn't *have* to save all the dragons from stone. You could have just freed one and made it his problem."

Noticing she had gotten his attention, Ember wasn't going to let up now. "The same goes with Avalar. You didn't *have* to help them. All you wanted was to go on a vacation and they interrupted that. You could have *forced* them to send you back, let them deal with Ripto themselves and get the orbs needed to do so, but you didn't." She gave a smile. "And same with the Forgotten Realms. Even though you were the only one who could, you didn't *have* to. Even after you freed the others who had been captured by the Sorceress, and even when they started to help you fight her, you still *chose* to keep on saving everyone instead of letting them handle it."

"You always have a choice, Spyro. Even if luck brought you there, that doesn't obligate you to do anything about it," Ember finished, giving him a soft smile.

Classic was silent, staring at the ground. After a moment, he glanced back up at Ember and smiled. "Thanks, Ember..."

"Any time," she said, grinning. "Don't forget, Spyro, your heroics also inspire others to do the same." She glanced downward with a shy

smile.

Classic paused, looking at Ember from the corner of his eye. He smiled slightly, closing his eyes. "Embs?"

"Yeah?" she asked, looking up at him.

"I want to say I'm sorry again for how I treated you early on... You're a good friend."

Ember smiled, shyly lowering her gaze. "Thanks..."

A silence followed as both dragons watched the setting sun. Finally, Classic stood up. "Alright, how 'bout we get back to training? I actually haven't used Dragon Kata much during my loops, so how 'bout we see if there are any ways to use it that even Sensei Ragnar didn't think of?"

It was unbelievable, Malefor thought, that so many useful things had been left in Convexity to rust and rot. Ripto called this location a 'dump' and he also complained of an acrid odor, though it didn't bother Malefor in the slightest. Among other things, his indefinite stay in the spork prison had destroyed his sense of smell. Maybe it was for the best that he did not react to the atrocious scent. In order to build up his army, Malefor had to make use of everything he could find. Even the resources found here were of use. And what use could that be?

Malefor stepped back from the sculptures he had built out of scrap metal, tires and plastic. His creations, his children, were objects of beauty, and soon they would be one of many carriers of judgement upon the hybrids.

Ripto wasn't too impressed. "Hooray, you made art. Go sell it to a museum, why don't ya."

"...It shall carry out the final solution, do not speak lowly of it," said Malefor in a tired voice. He was growing weary of his friend's constant insults and whines. "Ripto, be useful. Give me your wand, would you kindly?"

Ripto checked his cloak and produced the magical artifact. If Malefor could find more sources of arcane power, he could recycle the spells that he had stolen and edited from the Waterians' monsters so that his servants would carry out his plans with and without his supervision.

With the wand in claw, Malefor carefully removed the orb on its end and placed the sphere in the smallest of the statues: a tire, repurposed into a saw, with sharp pieces of tin lining the rims. Using his magic sense, he witnessed the currents of magic that flowed around the circular golem and decided that it was ready to be brought to life. First, a singularity was required. Without one, Malefor would have no way to command it over great distances.

Ripto stepped back a little once he saw Malefor doing something...weird with his eyes. The wheel and its surroundings appeared to stretch and squash until a light began to glow in its center. Then, the tire began to roll back and forth and, as it did, Ripto concluded that Malefor was possessing it by some dark, forbidden power.

Suddenly, it pointed itself toward a pile of junk and attacked, flattening the mound into a perforated pancake. At this, Malefor smirked. His first golem was working smoothly. All it needed was a directive, a cause that would drive it at all times. It needed to be enchanted. Remembering the skills that he had picked up during his last conquest, Malefor summoned a magical interface of Waterian design and proceeded to cast a spell, dictating his commands to the living wheel.

"Spin, spin, spin with a raucous din. For victory, for the destruction of hybrid fiends, for me, you shall win."

With that chant, the incantation was applied and Malefor welcomed the newborn monster into his arms, cautious not to catch his scales on its blades. As he stroked the animate tire on its 'head,' joy dug its way into his calloused heart. No longer was he alone. He had his progeny, his friends, to support him, to defend him, to carry out his final solution. All he needed was more power, more magic.

"Ripto."

Ripto shuddered, hoping that Malefor wouldn't request him to participate in target practice with the little beast he had just brought to life. "Y-yes?"

"Magic, I need more. Where can these...spheres be found?"

"I stole it from a hardware store, so I bet there are factories that make them."

"Excellent." Here, Malefor took no chances, squashing all thoughts of rebellion and fear in Ripto's mind. " ***Listen closely*** . You will collect more for me. Once we have built enough golems, we will take one of these factories, collect materials and increase our numbers. A glorious plan, is it not?"

"Yes, Malefor."

"Now, go."

Ripto immediately sprinted off in the portal transit's direction. He didn't need any further instruction and his life was now dedicated to the purpose of scavenging more orbs for Malefor's army.

Meanwhile, Malefor continued to cradle the round horror in his arms. It was possible that true dragons like himself no longer existed, and that was fine. If there was no one of pure ancestry to restore the dragons' bloodline, the golems would carry his legacy—the legacy of the true dragon.

The air grew cold as evening fell over the city of Lorefang and Legend made his way towards Cynder and Ember's house. Nina had asked him to pick up his brother. Walking up to the door, he knocked on it. He could hear footsteps coming from inside before the door opened to reveal Cynder on the other side. Seeing Legend standing there, she smiled.

"Hey, Spyro," she said, walking over to him.

"Hey," he said, smiling as he sat down. "How have things been lately?"

"Annoying," Cynder said flatly, her expression going flat. "I think your other self might be a bad influence on Ember." She glanced back to make sure Classic wasn't listening. "Just this morning, I went to check on Edna because I hadn't seen her all morning. I checked her bedroom and found her plucking mustache hairs off her lip." Cynder rolled her eyes. "All the while, I heard giggling coming from Ember's bedroom."

"Yeah, sounds about right," Legend said, chuckling slightly. "He's not as bad as I originally thought when the loop started, but...I'd suggest keeping on eye on them when they're together, if only to make sure he doesn't get her into serious trouble."

"It's still a bit hard to believe that someone who looks so much like you could be so different..." Cynder said, trailing off as she rolled her eyes.

In the silence that followed, Legend glanced back at the sky. He took a few seconds' pause before looking back at Cynder. "...You feel it too? The uneasiness in the air?"

"Yeah," Cynder said, walking out to gaze at the sky. "There's been this uneasy feeling all day. I can't quite place it, but it feels like..."

"...something big is coming," Legend finished. Silence fell over the two dragons as they continued to stare at the sky. A few seconds

passed before Legend closed his eyes, taking a deep breath to steady himself. Years and years of war had given him a sixth sense when it came to impending battles, and if Cynder was feeling it too...

"Nina wanted me to pick up my brother," he said, finally breaking the silence. "I feel like it might be best to stick together until this feeling passes, but I doubt Nina will approve of us spending the night here."

Cynder closed her eyes and nodded before starting to head inside. "I'll go get him," she said, stopping to glance back at Legend. "Just be careful for now."

"I will," Legend said, closing his eyes. "May the ancestors look after us all, no matter what comes our way."

With that, Cynder entered the house. Legend took one last glance up at the sky. He may not have known for sure what was causing this feeling of unease, but he would be ready for whatever would happen. He had been through war countless times. It was integrated to his baseline and always seemed to follow him wherever he went. If it were to start up in this peaceful variant, then he'd be the first one to step up and stop it... Just like always.

(Hoo boy. Things are starting to get rather serious here. Sorry if it felt like this chapter was bit all over the place. With a new antagonist force coming in, on top of everyone wanting to get any misc. stuff they wanted to write out of the way before things start getting really serious, it kind of ended up this way. Hopefully there wasn't too much of a whiplash, though.

Odd, though... This Malefor definitely seems a lot different in comparison to baseline. And what was up with those 'Waterians' he keeps having dreams of? Eh, I'm sure it's nothing. How will the loopers handle the incoming storm, though? You'll just have to wait and see next time!

Remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and make sure to stop by the official FF.N Forum!)

Shattered Peace (!)

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

(Fused 1.1 continued) (Feat: TokoWH, Ukelele, AbZ)

The air was thick with tension as Malefor gazed down at the line of workings in the factory. Taking it over had been far easier than he had originally thought. It had been little more than a simple feat of using Convexity to enforce his will upon the workers, like he had done to Ripto many times. For the time being, they were necessary in order to mass-produce his golems for the upcoming battle, and for any golems that needed to be replaced during it. Once they had outlived their usefulness, though, they too would suffer the same fate as the rest. Then, once his revenge on the Waterians was complete, he'd finally be able to live in peace, no longer tormented by the monsters that had done this to him...

Malefor turned his abnormally large pupils towards Ripto, who was leaning against a wall.

"Tell me, Malefor..." Ripto said, messing around with the new orb atop his scepter. "Once we deal with your vengeance act, I'll be able to control a good part of the realm?"

"If that is what you wish, friend," Malefor said, looking back down to the production line.

"Good," Ripto stated, clutching his scepter tightly. "Stupid dragons... This is what they deserve for their ignorance..."

Malefor paused, glancing back over to the scowling raptor. Despite having relied on him for a good few months while he'd tried to adjust to this world, Malefor admittedly didn't know much about Ripto. He mentally kicked himself for being such a lousy friend. No wonder Ripto was so angry around him. How could he expect Ripto to be his

friend if he never helped him with his troubles? Shaking his head, Malefor intended to correct this oversight right now.

"Ripto?" Malefor asked, getting his attention. "I know you know why I hate the Waterians so much by now, but why is it you detest them as much as I do?"

"Because!" Ripto said, jumping forward as he waved his scepter back and clenched his fist. "It's because of their terrible justice system that I have to live like this!"

Malefor blinked, looking at the enraged raptor blankly. "How so?"

Ripto growled before taking a deep breath to calm himself a little.

"It was years ago," he began, tightening his grip on his scepter. "I was an apprentice to a Sorceress at the time. She had sent me out to the town to pick up some charms, orbs and general trinkets to assist in a few spells she was working on." Ripto paused, sighing as he lowered his head. "While I was in one of the stores—'Orbs of Avalar,' I believe—it was robbed. Robbed by a bunch of idiot teenage dragons who thought they could make a quick buck off of powerful artefacts they couldn't even *begin* to comprehend!"

"One of those morons ended up grabbing an orb of highly concentrated magic and began blasting the place up like he was in some stupid video game!" Ripto growled, sounding more enraged by the second. "He ended up seriously hurting several of the other beings there and nearly blasted a child!"

Malefor's jaw dropped. Had years of having the Waterian's blood running in their veins turned the dragons of this world into such savages?

"Needless to say, since this was back when I *didn't* hate the dragon race with a passion, I was quick to stand in. I grabbed the nearest defence orb and sent the blast right back at that moron," Ripto said

before he let out a long, exasperated sigh. "Had I known what was going to happen next, I likely would have just beat it out of there."

"The teenagers booked it out of the store after that and, wouldn't you know it, not a second later the police showed up. And because I still had my hands on the defence orb like an idiot, they assumed *I* was trying to rob the place!" Ripto exclaimed, raising his hands in the air. "Can you believe that?! *Me! The one who drove the robbers off!* "

"That's terrible!" Malefor said, placing a paw over his mouth. "What of the witnesses, though? Surely they corrected that mistake."

"I wish!" Ripto bellowed, gritting his teeth. "Thanks to those dragons, those *morons* , nearly everyone in the place had been knocked out and most of them had to be hospitalized. To make matters worse, *somehow* they ended up messing with the security feed and destroyed the records of that day. Though, honestly, I have *another* idea for what really happened to those..." Ripto said, his voice thick with hatred. "And then there was that *child* , the child *I saved...* Even after saving his life, he refused to take the stand, despite being the only witness who wasn't severely injured..."

Ripto placed the butt of his scepter on the ground and leant on it, taking deep breaths. "Because of all this, I was convinced of a crime I didn't do...and have had to live my life like you've seen ever since."

Malefor blinked as silence fell over them, broken only by the sounds of Ripto's heavy breathing.

"That's awful. But..." Malefor dared to break the silence as he lowered his head down to Ripto's level. "...doesn't that all sound a bit... *contrived?* It almost sounds like the *universe* was out to get you falsely convicted."

"I'm not sure about the universe, but I sure as hell know *someone* was!" Ripto said, scowling as a sudden second wind washed over him. "The trial was *rigged! Rigged, I tell you!* " Ripto nearly broke his scepter in two with how tightly he clutched it. "It's the only possible

explanation! There's no way the tapes that were in the back office were blown up from the main hall! And even if the witnesses were injured, they should have been able to testify!"

He took a deep breath, staggering around and using his scepter as balance. "On top of that, the *dragon* persecutor was famous for never losing a case. There had to be some shady business going on... But the crowner, the *freaking crowner* , had to be when they asked me to prove my claim of using the orb to save the child."

"I swear, either the orb they gave me or the orb used to simulate the attack spell had been tampered with, but the blast felt *far* more powerful than before," Ripto said, his teeth bared, barely able to stand in his rage. "I was overpowered not even seconds in...and I'll *never* forget what that monster of a persecutor said seconds afterwards."

" 'Bah. You see, citizens of the jury? This creature before you couldn't even hold a simple shield for a few seconds. Yet he claims to have blocked the so-called ' real' perpetrator's attacks. How can this be? If he were a dragon, perhaps his claim might hold water, but for this so-called magician, the truth is painfully obvious. Citizens of the jury, the guilty party is none other than the pathetic raptor on the ground before you!' "

Once again, silence fell as Ripto finished recounting his tale. Malefor could only gawk as he tried to process what he had been told.

'Have the Waterian hybrids really become such monsters? As if turning on pure dragons wasn't enough...'

Malefor closed his eyes, then reopened them with new determination. "Do not worry, my friend..." he said, walking over and placing a wing over Ripto. Then, in the coldest tone he had ever mustered, he added, "The Waterian hybrids will *pay* for how they have wronged us."

With that, Malefor walked over to the edge of the platform they were on and looked down at his ever-growing golem army. With a swift motion, he raised his arms and spread his wings, the air around him growing cold as purple tendrils floated down to the golems below. The orbs on the golems began to glow and each one blinked to life. Malefor chuckled at his handiwork.

"Listen to me, my children!" he proclaimed, his voice reverberating throughout the factory. "For far too long the Waterians have gotten away with their sins! To this day, all the beings they have wronged are still unable to rest in peace and their lineage lives on through the hybrids of this town!"

"In the name of all those they have disrespected, we must not allow them to continue to thrive!" Malefor proclaimed, throwing his paw in front of him.

"As such, go! Go now, my children! Kill every last Waterian hybrid in this horrid town! Let none of them escape your wrath and let them feel the pain they caused tenfold!"

The golems stood up at his command as the factory door began to open. Slowly but surely they began to exit in pairs, and, within the factory, more were made by the second.

For the first time in a millennium, Malefor smiled. Soon... Soon he would no longer be tormented by the Waterians and he could finally live in peace.

Hunter yawned as he trudged into the living room, having just woken up. The loop so far hadn't been too eventful, what with his Spyro hanging out with the Spyro that had attempted to murder him. For the most part, Hunter had spent most of this loop doing daily things. Watching TV, getting groceries, stuff like that. Sure, the other Sparx frequently came by his apartment to get away from his Sparx—unlike the other Spyro, he didn't seem all that bad—but they rarely talked as Legend Sparx was more than content with watching TV.

Lazily reaching into the fridge to grab an energy drink, Hunter sighed. Part of him almost wished something would happen, like Ripto popping up to terrorize people, if only to give him something to do.

His musings were interrupted by an all too familiar voice spitting out a curse word, which was quickly followed by a rapid string of profanities. Hunter glanced over to see Ihy at his laptop, his claws clutching his own head and his eyes wide.

"This is bad!" he exclaimed, quickly placing his paws back on the laptop and beginning to type. "This is bad, bad, bad, bad, *bad!* "

Hunter raised an eyebrow. "What's up with you?"

At this, the dragon admin whipped his head around and looked at Hunter with a scowl. *"Ripto found the spork!"*

Hunter blinked. He was about to ask exactly what that meant, but never got the chance as a series of explosions shook the whole apartment.

Classic yawned, stretching as he woke from slumber. Groggily opening his eyes, he glanced over to his brother's bed.

"Mo—"

His attempt at greeting his brother awake was interrupted when an explosion tore the silence to shreds, the resulting shockwave sending Classic tumbling out of his bed. Legend jolted awake, quickly raising out of his bed, his eyes scanning the room.

"Wha—what's going!?" he asked, but before anyone could answer, another explosion shook the house and both Spyros braced themselves.

Rapid footsteps could be heard through the chaos, and the door to their room flung open. Nina looked down at her children with relief in her eyes.

"Oh, thank goodness you're both alright!" She sighed, but the moment of relief was interrupted when another shockwave shook the house. Nina struggled to keep her balance, trying her best to keep her cool as she looked down at her sons. "Hurry! We need to run! *Now!* "

"Why!? What the heck is going on!?" Classic yelled, struggling to get to his paws as the explosions grew closer and louder.

"There's no time to explain!" Nina said, rushing over and picking Classic up. "We're all in great danger!"

Legend quickly got to his paws and hopped out of bed, his eyes narrowing as he glanced towards the window. He knew these sounds all too well. Even in what was supposed to be a peaceful variant, it appeared that war would always find him, no matter what. Before he could continue his thought process, he was scooped up by Nina and rushed out the door and down the stairs.

"Flash! I got them! Let's get out of here!" she called, rushing towards the door.

Flash, who was currently looking for anything that wasn't nailed down that could be used as a weapon, nodded as he rushed over to his wife. With their children in tow, they fled towards the back door in hopes of evading the chaos going on outside, but as soon as they opened the door, the Spyros caught a glimpse of what was happening.

Chaos. Pure and utter chaos as far as the eye could see. Explosions shook the city, buildings caught on fire, and the sky had turned an eerie red as if in protest of the nightmarish scene. Classic's jaw dropped as his eyes went wide, but Legend was quick to start scanning the area for the cause of the mayhem.

As their parents hopped the fence and began running down the alleyway, they came face-to-face with what was causing this madness. An assortment of golems, appearing to be meshed together with a mixture of random mechanical parts and the earth itself, dropped down in front of them. Each had a single glowing red orb for a 'face' and they were all trained upon the family of dragons. Legend narrowed his eyes at them. Though they looked far more bizarre than usual, he knew all too well what they were—and who the dragon behind all this had to be.

"Malefor!" he hissed under his breath, baring his fangs as the golems slowly approached with weapons raised.

Only Classic heard Legend utter that name. He was about to say something, but never got the chance as Legend jumped out of his mother's grasp. Nina looked on with mouth agape and eyes wide as Legend made a stance in front of them and hunkered down.

"Spyro! Get back!"

Legend looked back at his worried mother in concern, noticing the wide-eyed look Classic was giving him. He shook his head before looking back at the golems. Legend knew Classic didn't want to reveal the fact that they were looping at any cost, but now things had gotten far too out of hand. If Malefor was in this loop, he'd rather have to spend the rest of it hiding away somewhere than give him full run of the place.

Glowing a faint green, Legend slammed his paws into the ground, the resounding shockwave sending two pillars up into the air. He clapped his paws and the pillars slammed together, crushing the golems in their path. Legend slammed his paws to the ground again, causing the pillars to sink back into the earth, and glanced back at the wide-eyed stares of his parents.

"Spyro...?"

Legend's shoulders fell as his father uttered his name. As much as he wished he could have stayed with them for the rest of the loop, as much as he wished he could have had a *normal* life for once, he wasn't about to let others suffer on his watch.

"I'm sorry," was the only thing he could think to say. "I wish I could explain this, but there's no time. I have to help the others."

With that, Legend darted down the alleyway as the sound of more approaching golems became louder.

"Spyro!" his parents called as they began to chase after him.

Classic could only stare at the chaos going on. Never in his many adventures, even during the war with the Breeze Builders and Land Blubbers, had he seen anything like this. His mouth hung agape as he tried to collect his thoughts, bouncing in his mother's grip, the scenery rushing past as she ran not helping matters at all. He'd never experienced anything like this before.

His mind raced as he tried to think of what he should do. Could he even take on an army of these things? He had managed to take out groups of enemies on his adventures before, but never *this* many! And what would his parents say if he started to use his looper powers? They'd definitely know something was up, that their son wasn't normal.

Classic wasn't sure why, but something about that thought terrified him greatly.

Finally they came to an abrupt stop, the sound of metal on stone ringing out. Classic turned his head to see another collection of golems blocking their way.

Flash stepped in front of them, growling as he got on all fours. "Get out of the way!"

One of the golems stepped forth, its red orb flashing as it spoke in a monotonous voice, "Hybrid scum. Your death is imminent."

Flash's eyes narrowed. "I *said* get out of the way, you B-Horror movie rejects!"

He charged forward, claws bared, and tried to swipe at the closest golem. As his blow connected, the shriek of claws on metal filled the air and sparks flared. The golem stood firm and Flash's eyes went wide. It appeared no worse for wear, like the blow had hardly fazed it.

"Wha— *agh!* "

Flash was tossed aside as the golem punched him in the chest. Nina gasped and Classic flinched as Flash rolled across the ground, coming to a stop when he hit a fence.

"Flash!" Nina called, attempting to run over to him.

The golem was not about to let that happen. Sliding across the ground, it was quick to interrupt Nina's charge. She staggered back, grabbing Classic in both paws as her eyes went wide with horror.

"Hybrid scum," the golem said, raising what appeared to be an arm-cannon at the dragons. "Prepare to be eliminated."

Finally, Classic let out a gasp as if knocked out of a trance. He didn't care if his parents thought of him as a freak; he wasn't about to let these golems hurt them. Opening his command line without thinking, Classic began writing in his spell.

"[#!]run Shock. emt"

Not a second later, the golem was struck down by a bolt of lightning, sending it crashing to the ground. Nina staggered back, clutching Classic tighter as her jaw dropped.

"Wha—what in the sweet name of the ancestors is going on!?" she exclaimed, her head darting back and forth.

Classic frowned as Nina held on to him tighter. He knew he needed to step up his game and quick, but, at the same time, for a reason he couldn't understand, all he could think about was what his parents would think. He shook his head. He knew they really weren't *his* parents. He'd never had actual parents, and yet...

Classic sighed, closing his eyes. Not a second later, he disappeared from Nina's grip in a flurry of polygons, only to reappear again a short distance away. She almost fell backwards from shock as she looked down at her son.

"What? Spyro...?"

Classic frowned, his eyelids drooping as he looked at his father, who was desperately trying to pick himself up, and then to his mother, who had her paws over her mouth. He took a deep breath, closing his eyes.

"Thank you," Classic murmured. "Thank you both for being such good loop parents."

"What? Spyro, what in the Dragon Realms are you talking about?" Nina asked, reaching out to her child.

Classic backed up a bit, wincing slightly as his mother flinched at his action. He sighed. "I really wish I could explain... It's just..."

He looked up at his parent's confused faces and frowned, closing his eyes. "Please be safe. Both of you."

With that, before either of them could understand what was happening, Classic ran his teleportation spell, intending to send his parents as far into the outskirts of the city as he had been. The last he saw of them was his mother reaching out to him. Classic closed

his eyes, rubbing one of them gently. He paused as he pulled his paw away, noticing moisture on his scales.

'Wha... I'm...?'

Classic's train of thought was interrupted when an explosion rang out behind him. He scowled, turning around with narrowed eyes and baring his fangs.

"Alright, you Terminator wannabes!" he yelled, hunkering down and growling. "Let's see how you handle being turned into scrap metal!"

In another part of town, another family of dragons rushed their way through the streets in the midst of chaos. Cynder lunged forward, knocking a golem down and quickly stabbing at its magic orb with her tailblade. It didn't take much to figure out the weakness of these things, and with that in mind, it was easy to make short work of them. Ember stood close to Edna's side, Cynder telling her to protect her while she took the lead. Edna's head darted around all over the place before she finally looked down at her daughters.

"This isn't right! I should be protecting you two! Not the other way around!" she said, though a nearby explosion caused her to flinch.

Cynder shook her head, glancing back over to Edna. "It's alright. I have everything under control."

Edna glanced at her daughter, internally cursing herself for being so weak and needing to rely on her child to protect her. She knew that she stood no chance against these things. She had no idea why her daughter seemed to be such a natural at dealing with these golems, but she knew Cynder was likely the only one of them who could hold her own against them.

As the trio kept running, Ember glanced up at the sky to see the *lucky* dragons dodging aerial projectiles that were being lobbed at them as they fought a squadron of golems, which somehow

possessed the power of flight. Flying was definitely out of the option for now; at least they could try to deal with these things while they were on the ground trying to make a hasty escape. Glancing down, she noticed Cynder had darted further ahead to deal with a trio of approaching golems. Though she handily dealt with them, Ember was quick to notice a golem aiming what appeared to be an arm-cannon at Cynder. Her jaw dropping, Ember quickly spread her wings.

"Cynder! *Look out!* "

Cynder raised her head, only noticing the cannon that was aimed at her when the golem had already fired a giant blast of fire at her. Before it connected, Ember flew forward and grabbed Cynder, sending the both of them tumbling out of the way just in time.

Cynder took a deep breath, steadying her nerves as she got to her paws. "Thanks," she said, glancing over to Ember.

"No problem," Ember replied, getting to her paws as well.

Edna had paused when she'd seen Ember take flight for a few seconds, but quickly shook it off when an explosion reminded her of the chaos going on around her. She attempted to catch up to her daughters, but a golem with a saw blade for a hand slid in front of her. Letting out a scream, she narrowly dodged being sliced in half and staggered backwards.

"Mom!" Ember called, attempting to rush over to her. Before she could, a squad of golems jumped down and encircled them, causing her to stagger back.

"Hybrid scum," one of the golems said in a monotonous voice, its red orb flashing. "Your death is imminent."

Cynder hunkered down and growled, glaring at the golems. She glanced over to Ember, who was shaking as she backed up.

"Ember, calm down," Cynder said, making sure to keep a firm eye on the golems. "Remember what we taught you. I promise I'll have your back. I won't let any serious harm happen to you."

Ember paused next to Cynder. Taking in her words, she gulped. She took a deep breath to steady her nerves and gave a slight nod before getting into the stance that she had been taught only days before. Her wide eyes and the frown on her face didn't exactly spell confidence, but Cynder noted that at least she wasn't cowering in fear like with the mugger.

"Remember, the orbs are their weak points," Cynder said, focusing on the golems. "Take them out and they're as good as dead."

"Got it," Ember squeaked out, trying her best to keep steady.

The golems stood firm as one of them lurched forward. Cynder was the first to make a move, charging forward and ducking under a saw blade before stabbing at the golem's orb, shattering it to pieces and causing the golem to collapse. Ember stared in awe at the nearly flawless motion, but didn't have much time to gawk as she barely ducked and avoided having her horns chopped off.

She jumped backward, maintaining her stance as she saw a golem step forth. *'Okay, okay, calm down. Remember what you were taught. These guys seem too big to grab, so try going for their—* Eek!" Ember yelped, barely ducking under a saw blade swing and staggering back.

The golem charged again and Ember's eyes went wide. As if on impulse, she got back on her paws and spun around, swiping at the golem's legs with her tail. The hit landed and the golem toppled over onto the ground. Ember took a few deep breaths, taking a moment to process what happened. For a split second, realizing what she had done, a surprised smile found its way onto her face, but was quickly wiped off again as she barely dodged having her horns severed again by another golem.

Staggering backwards, Ember got back into her stance. Another golem was quickly making its way towards her.

'Come on! You toppled that other golem! You can do this!' she thought to herself in an attempt to steady her nerves. *'You can do this... You can do this...'* Ember closed her eyes, then reopened and narrowed them at the golem. *'I can do this... I can do this!'*

With that thought in mind, she charged forward, ducking under the saw blade and landing a head-butt to the golem's chest, toppling it over. Before it could right itself, Ember was atop it, bringing her paw down and grabbing at its orb. The orb began to spark and Ember let out a gasp of pain, but she was determined not to give up now. With all her might, she pulled back in an attempt to dislodge the orb. Finally, something gave way and it went flying into the air, sending Ember toppling backwards in the process.

As she quickly righted herself, she saw the golem's body go limp. Taking a few deep breaths, she narrowed her eyes again before getting back into a defensive stance, seeing another golem headed her way. She shook her head, glaring at it. Acting almost on instinct alone, Ember charged forward, a bluish aura beginning to form around her wings. As she swung them forward, a wave of chi surged forth and knocked several golems to the ground.

Seeing her handiwork, a smirk found its way onto Ember's face. If these loops thought they could push her around again like with that mugger, they had another thing coming.

Legend narrowed his eyes, jumping into the air and slamming the ground, creating a shockwave as he ran that bellowed throughout the surrounding area, knocking several golems down in the process. He knew that trying to take care of these things individually wouldn't do much good. Before anything else, he needed to regroup with Cynder, and then they would have to find and take out the leader of this assault.

"Hey!"

While maintaining his pace, Legend glanced up to see Classic flying towards him, making sure to stay low enough to avoid detection from the aerial attackers. Classic quickly flew down next to him.

"What are you doing here?" Legend asked, raising an eyebrow.

"What? Did you really think I was just going to sit around while someone tore up the town?" Classic asked, giving a smirk.

Legend narrowed his eyes. "What about our parents?"

"Don't worry, I teleported them as far away from this chaos as I could," Classic said, giving a sigh. "So much for keeping a low profile, though..."

A loud crashing sound was heard as an explosion rocketed forth in front of them, forcing both Spyros to a stop. A horde of golems burst out from the ruins of a nearby building. Classic's jaw dropped, but Legend stood firm and narrowed his eyes.

"It's like there's no end to them..."Classic said under his breath, though he was quick to shake it off as he cracked his trademark smirk. "No problem! We'll turn 'em into tin cans before they know what hit them!"

"We shouldn't be wasting our energy on taking them all out. They've made it readily apparent they have no shortage of reserves," Legend said, glancing over to Classic from the corner of his eye. "Our first priority is to find the others. For now, just focus on pushing past them."

Classic scoffed. "No problem! I think I have the perfect solution in my subspace."

Legend raised an eyebrow. "Really? And what's that?"

Classic grinned, glancing over to his loop brother. "Tell me, Ro... Do you have supercharge orbs in your world?"

Legend turned his head, raising an eyebrow as he got a sudden feeling of dread.

Golems went flying in the air as two purple blurs shot past, the sound of scraping metal and loud crashes almost drowned out by the panic-stricken shouting from one of said blurs. As they easily pushed through the roadblock, one of the blurs skidded to a stop. Classic looked behind at their handiwork with a smirk.

"No problem! See? What did I—wait, *where are you going!?* "

"HOW DO I STOP THIS CRAZY—?!"

The purple blur's scream was silenced when it collided with a building. Classic was quick to rush over, but Legend was already pulling himself up, stumbled around in a daze.

Classic flinched, scratching the back of his neck. "Eh, sorry about the crash course. I didn't expect we'd end up fighting an army today."

As soon as he'd regained his balance, Legend rolled his eyes. Shaking it off, he looked towards the road. "Come on! We need to find the others!"

Ember ducked under a saw blade, retaliating with a quick tail smack that sent the golem staggering back. It was quick to regain balance as it began moving forward again. Ember groaned. She and Cynder had been dealing with golems for the past few minutes with no end in sight. Glancing over, she saw Cynder bring her tailblade down on a golem's orb, shattering it to pieces. She looked forward just as her own golem charged at her. Rolling out of the way at the last second, she sighed.

'This is nuts! At least Cynder has a way to take these out for good. Trying to pull the orbs out isn't reliable enough, and I'm not strong enough to smash the orbs on my own!' Ember thought, jumping to avoid a golem swiping at her legs and retaliating with a head-butt. *'No, calm down, Ember. Remember, you can do this. Think... What would Spyro do?'*

Ember kept a firm glare on the golem in front of her as she thought. Her Spyro was always one to think outside the box, especially with his powers. There must have been some way for her to use one of her powers to reliably break these orbs. Fire was definitely out, considering flames didn't do much against earth, and she only had a base understanding of magic; her reflect spell was the only one she knew. The only other ability she knew was Dragon Kata...

Ember rolled out of the way as the golem lunged forth. As she got back up, she swiped at its legs again, knocking it over. She jumped on it to keep it from getting up and, with a few seconds to think, tried to remember if there was any chi ability she had that could break the orbs. Chi Wings and Roar were more crowd-control than anything else, and Chi Punch was more of a long-range attack. She growled.

'Come on, that can't be the only chi abilities possible!' she thought, having a harder time keeping the golem down as it struggled to right itself. *'Spyro and I were trying to come up with something new for it a few days ago. If there was ever a time to follow through on that hope, now would be it.'*

She started swaying back and forth as the golem began thrashing more violently. Finally, with one mighty blow, Ember was thrown off and sent tumbling across the ground. She got up in a daze, struggling to stand as the golem got to its feet. Shaking her head, she glared at it.

'Think! Manifesting chi isn't hard! It's just a matter of focusing it into a new attack!' Ember thought, beginning to pant heavily as beads of sweat formed on her forehead. *'I need to focus it into a point in order*

to pierce the orb! Something that could dig into it without much problems! Something like...' Ember's eyes went wide. *'A drill!'*

She sidestepped a charging golem and used its own momentum against it, striking it in the back with her tail and sending it tumbling. With a moment to think, she raised her paw.

'Okay, I need to focus the chi into a spinning point! This hopefully shouldn't be too hard...'

Ember took a deep breath, beginning to channel her chi into her foreleg. As it started to glow, a fine point began to appear at the tip of her paw. She smirked, beginning to focus it on spiralling around. Small tendrils began to appear on her arm, spiralling slowly. Ember bit her lip.

'It's going too slow! I have to speed it u— AHH!"

Ember was knocked from her train of thought when she was blindsided by a golem, sending her tumbling to the side and skidding across the ground. Cynder raised her head at the shout of pain, her eyes going wide.

"Ember!"

"I'm— *ugh* ...fine!" Ember forced out, getting to her paws. "Don't worry about me. I can...handle this."

She tried her best to push the throbbing pain aside. Cynder was just about to charge over to help her, but a golem nearly managed to connect a saw blade strike against her and she growled. More golems quickly began to circle her as she narrowed her eyes.

Ember glanced up to see the golem that had landed the blow approaching her. She bared her fangs. She knew she couldn't take another blow like that, so she needed to end this now or there'd be no second chances. Taking a deep breath, she spread her wings and

charged forward, letting out a yell as she channelled the chi back into her paw, the tendrils beginning to spin quicker and quicker.

The blow connected with a shattering sound and the orb practically exploded in shards. As the chi drill kept going, the rest of the upper torso gave wave, punching a hole straight through the golem. Ember stopped, watching as the golem fell over, and then looked at her paw as the chi energy faded to a faint glow. Her face was blank for a few seconds before she looked at an assortment of golems that were standing a short ways away.

She smirked. "What's the matter? Afraid of getting your butts handed to you by a pink dragoness?"

One of the golem's orbs began to glow bright red and it charged at her. Ember giggled. *'I'm beginning to see why Spyro likes taunting his enemies so much.'*

With a confident grin, she charged forward, the chi drill beginning to form on her foreleg.

As Ember finally got an edge on the golems, Cynder looked around at the ones surrounding her. She let out a low growl and reared onto her hind legs as the golems charged. Channeling her wind element, she began to spin around as a powerful mini-twister enveloped her. The currents of wind knocked the golems off balance and Cynder pushed her way through them as she let the twister die down. Dropping back to all fours, she was quick to stab the nearest golem's orb.

It was then another shriek was heard. Cynder and Ember raised their heads, seeing Edna being cornered by three golems.

"Mom!"

Both dragonesses attempted to charge over to her, but were quickly blocked by a group of golems. They growled, attempting to charge forward in tandem with claws and fangs bared. As they did their best

to push through the blockade, one of the golems surrounding Edna stood forward and raised its saw blade. She shrieked as the blade came down full force towards her.

The sound of scraping metal rang out as the ground in front of Edna surged up, blocking the blade and sending sparks flying. The golem staggered back just as the ground under its feet gave way, sending it and the other two golems tumbling down into a hole. It snapped shut an instant later, crushing all three. The stone barrier in front of Edna sank back into the earth, revealing a young purple dragon standing in front of her.

"Spyro!" Cynder exclaimed, hurrying over to Legend.

Ember quickly followed, glancing back at the golems that were in hot pursuit. It was then she noticed faint blue sparks starting to form overhead. In an instant, a streak of lightning shot out of the sky, arcing across the golem's heads and shattering their orbs. Looking upwards, Ember saw a purple dragon gliding towards the ground. At this, she smiled.

"Spyro!" she exclaimed as Classic landed with the rest of the group.

As the group of dragons rejoined, Edna could only look down at the four of them in confusion. "Wha—what in the realms...?"

Classic shook his head, looking up at the adult dragoness. "Sorry about this. Really wish I could explain, but I need to get you out of here and fast!"

With that, Classic opened his command line and Edna disappeared in a flurry of polygons.

Ember's jaw dropped and her eyes went wide before she turned to Classic. "Where did you teleport her to!?"

"Relax. I sent her to the furthest outskirts of the city I've been so far," Classic explained, closing the command line as he looked at Ember.

"From what we could gather, they're only focusing on the innermost part of the city at the moment. She should be safe now," Legend added, keeping an eye out as he could hear more golems incoming.

"I don't suppose you two have any idea what's going on, huh?" Ember asked, panting heavily now that she had a moment to catch her breath.

"I think I do, if only a part of it," Legend said before he glanced at Cynder.

Cynder gave a nod. "I thought so too. This has Malefor written all over it."

Legend frowned, looking up to the red sky. "What's he doing in this loop, though? I thought Ihy said he'd written him out of it."

"It's *Malefor* ," Cynder stated flatly. "Given his track record, it's not really all that surprising that he found *some* way to defy a deity."

Classic and Ember glanced at each other, Classic frowning slightly. As the sound of the golems approaching grew louder, Legend turned his gaze to the street. Shaking his head, he looked back at the group. "We can talk about how this happened later. We still need to find the others."

Looking down the street at the golems drawing closer, the group of four dragons took defensive stances and, with barely a nod from Legend, charged forth.

Hunter bit his lip as he ran, looking back to take a few shots at the golems with his blaster. *'When I said I wanted something eventful, I didn't mean a raid on the town!'* he thought, turning to the dragon admin who was flying beside him. "What the heck is going on!?"

Ihy said nothing, holding his laptop in one paw as he tried in vain to activate his teleportation function to get back to Yggdrasil.

Hunter looked back and his eyes went wide. Quickly grabbed Ihy, he dove to the ground. "Hit the dirt!" he exclaimed, seconds before a rocket shot over them and slammed into a far off building. Hunter shook his head, looking at the scowling admin. "Aren't you supposed to be, like, a god or something? Can't you just zap these guys out of existence!?"

"I *could* if I was at my terminal," Ihy replied, narrowing his eyes as they picked themselves up and began running again. "However, *someone* is keeping me from getting back to Yggdrasil to fix all this!"

He pulled up his laptop and tried to type as he flew. Another rocket flew by, the explosion catching them off guard, and Ihy struggled to keep a hold of his laptop. Growling, he bared his fangs. " *GAH!* If I could just have *five seconds* to think!"

Hunter looked around as they ran, hoping to find cover. The golems were in hot pursuit, even as he fired more blaster shots at them. Being the marksman he was, he managed to land a few direct hits to their orbs. Regardless of the few he took out, though, more would only take their place shortly after. Hunter gritted his teeth.

"I don't suppose there's any way you can contact the others, huh!?" Hunter asked, glancing over to Ihy.

"Again, if I had five seconds to think!" the admin said, barely balancing his laptop as it was.

Hunter groaned. *'I* really *regret what I thought earlier now.'*

He and Ihy quickly darted down an alleyway in hopes of losing their pursuers. In an attempt to hide, they ducked behind a dumpster. Several of the golems passed by the alleyway, but only a few of them bothered to turn and look down it. Luckily, that was all the golems did and they soon fell back into the group. Hunter breathed a sigh of relief.

"This is insane!" he said, glancing over to Ihy. "What are we supposed to do?"

"I'm working on it," Ihy said flatly, placing his laptop on the ground. "Now that I actually have some time to think, I can at least contact the others." He began to type. "I'll tell them to head for the library. It's in the middle of the town, so it'll be easy to spot, and we might also find some info on what the heck is going on here."

"Alright. I just hope the library is still *standing* , considering this chaos going on," Hunter said, shaking his head. "I've never seen anything like this in my entire life. It's insane!"

"That's for sure."

Both Hunter and Ihy paused before they turned towards the dumpster. A rustling sound came from within, then a yellow dragonfly poked his head out. Seeing the duo, Legend Sparx grinned.

"Finally! I was hoping I'd run into you guys! ...Or, really, anyone who knew how to properly defend themselves," he said, flying out of the dumpster and brushing grime off himself.

Hunter looked wide-eyed at him, then shook his head. "What were you doing in the dumpster?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe hiding from the automated killing machines bent on destroying the town?" Sparx said sarcastically. "It was insane. One second I was heading to your apartment, and the next thing I knew death bots were raining from the skies! I barely managed to find a hiding spot before everything started going crazy!"

"...How long have you been in there?" Ihy asked, covering his nose as Sparx got closer.

"Hey, given the choice between hiding in trash and being torn apart by those nightmarish things, I'd rather have to take a shower later in

return for staying alive, thank you very much," Sparx said, crossing his arms and scowling.

Ihy shook his head before turning to his laptop. Hunter looked at Sparx, narrowing his eyes.

"What about my Spyro's Sparx? Any idea what happened to him?"

"Not really," Sparx said, looking upwards. "Last time I saw him, he was going to check on his Spyro."

Ihy let out a short sigh before closing his laptop. "In any case, I sent the message to the loopers, so they should be making their way to the library soon. That's about the only thing I *can* do at the moment." He got to his paws.

"We should start heading there too, then," Hunter said, readying his blaster as he stood up.

"Wait, you want to go back out there while there's an army of those killing machines rampaging through the city!?" Sparx exclaimed, flying back in shock as he raised his hands in front of him.

"It's not like we have much of a choice. At least when we're all together we stand a better chance against these things," Hunter said before a smirk appeared on his face. "Besides, I'm pretty sure your stench alone is enough to knock out any golem that tries to get in our way."

Sparx's expression went flat and he looked away, crossing his arms. Hunter chuckled, but quickly shook it off. Now was not the time for jokes. With a nod from Ihy, the trio bolted towards the library.

"Resistance."

Ripto looked back at Malefor. He had become used to Malefor's odd speech patterns once he'd understood just how long the dragon had

been sealed in isolation.

"Resistance from who?" he replied.

Instead of directly answering Ripto, Malefor summoned his magical interface. Then, after tapping into his network of singularities made with his Convexity element, he opened a live surveillance feed from one of the deployed golems and displayed the image on thin air.

Scores of golems surrounded a quartet of whelps: two purples, one pink and one black. The pink was armed with a blue drill of some sort, while the black seemed perfectly satisfied with launching the metallic beasts into the sky with strong whirlwinds. However, Malefor took the most interest in the violet twins. One appeared to be a master magician, as he, without so much as raising a claw, lifted the golems and slammed them against the ground. The other appeared to be the embodiment of elemental combat, freezing his opponents solid and launching them at the rest of the army with pillars of raised earth.

Ripto could only gawk at this. "B-but, those are just little brats! If they can take on your army, the adults can crush it into fine dust, right?"

Shaking his head, Malefor put on a dark smirk. "No, no. As you can see," he boasted as he displayed recordings of fresh dragon corpses littering the streets, "my children are by no means incompetent. Rather, these four hybrids appear to be outliers that must be removed as quickly as possible, lest they manage to arrive here and confront us. If we could give them some...guidance, perhaps we can dispose of them before the day is over. Yes, I believe that one of our workers had a project that could serve our purpose well."

With that, the duo walked down to the assembly line, where dragons, moles and cheetahs were toiling mindlessly to build more golems for the army. They stopped at one worker, an elderly mole with large glasses and a lab coat.

Malefor addressed the scientist. "Sir, listen to me. You told me of a 'nanobot' project that you were working on, correct?"

The mole responded in monotone. "Yes, my assistant Elora and I spent the last month developing them, and their potential for domestic services will be limitless."

"These nanobots... They are tiny, so they are unnoticeable to the untrained eye. Is that true?"

"That is true."

"Excellent. Please, show me where you keep them."

Instead of getting up and leading them to a laboratory, the mole produced a small vial from his coat and held it out to Malefor. He eyed the flask and could not detect anything inside it. Ripto was also quick to point this out.

"Malefor, he's crazy. There's nothing inside that bottle."

At this, the mole provided a magnifying glass and the duo took a closer look. Within it, they could see multiple insect-like machines buzzing about. Ripto took the vial as Malefor expressed his gratitude. "Thank you, sir. Your service to me will not go unrewarded."

The scientist didn't respond, resuming his position at the assembly line. Malefor wasn't bothered. He had obtained a tool that would let him accomplish long-range brainwashing and he was anxious to remove any threat to his final solution.

"Ripto, please hold the bottle in front of you. I must prepare these nanobots for their mission."

"What do you plan to do with a bunch of tiny robots?"

Malefor sent an exasperated cloud of smoke at his friend. "Hold your questions until I'm finished."

And so, Malefor allowed Convexity to flow through his body, and the ritual that had brought his first golem to life would once again be invoked on the miniscule machines. "Pests of metal, locusts of wire, there are fools who dare raise my ire. Give chase and provide guidance, so that their little adventure ends in deathly silence."

Convexity focused space into a single point, a singularity, allowing Malefor to brainwash his enemies from afar. At least, he could hypnotize anyone in the near vicinity of the robots.

With that, Malefor warped the vial to its destination: the library. From what he had heard last, according to the golems' recordings, the 'heroic' quartet were on their way to the Lorefang Central Library. If he could—

"So, what's up with the mechanical fleas? You going to have them itch their scales off or something?" Ripto taunted.

"Far from it. Soon, those hybrid bastards will be at my beck and call." At this, Malefor couldn't help but get a little giddy.

"Wait, you're going to brainwash those kids into serving you with those nanobots?"

"Brilliant, isn't it?"

"Couldn't you just use the same singularity things that you use to command the golems on those brats?"

"That is exactly what I'm doing. Of course, I could go there myself and force them to serve me, but it is a wasted effort when I can send a small fleet to do it for me. Even better, those hybrids will be none the wiser. They could certainly see me coming, but would they be able to detect such small creatures?"

Ripto merely shook his head.

"I thought so. Ripto, do you understand why I was sealed away, forgotten by the ancestors themselves?"

"The Waterians sealed you in a spoon."

"Yes, that is what occurred, but why was I sealed away when I could have made my escape?"

Ripto considered this and answered, "You destroyed the civilization yourself, so the survivors had a clear target."

"Exactly. That is why I must prevent myself from being discovered. That is why I brought the portal transit and communication systems to a halt. That is why I will take precautions to wipe the memories of every worker in this factory. My name, my existence, is our secret. Do you understand, friend?"

Ripto nodded half-heartedly. He was in no way an advocate for the dragons, but as time went on, he'd noticed that, as tragic as Malefor was, his potential for sadism and cruelty was terrifying. Ripto had hoped that Malefor would only target his own race, but the measures that he had taken so far only made it clear that all who stood in his way would die painfully or serve him for the rest of their days. With all this in mind, Ripto couldn't help but think, *'What the hell have I gotten myself into?'*

Legend glanced back as he and his companions ran down the street. Not long ago, they'd received a scroll from Ihy telling them to head towards the library. Legend wasn't exactly sure how well fortified a structure like that was, but he could only assume these scrolls had been sent to all the current loopers of the branch and, now more than ever, they needed to stick together.

"Hurry! It's not much further!" Ember exclaimed, having taken the lead.

Classic looked back at the golems chasing them, their red orbs piercing through the billowing dust clouds kicked up by the explosions. He scowled and looked forward again. The library wasn't far off, but so far there were no signs of anyone else.

"Spyro!"

Both Spyros turned their heads, looking down one of the converging alleyways. Classic Sparx came darting out of it and quickly flew next to his Spyro.

"Sparx!" Classic exclaimed, a smile on his face.

"Sorry I'm late! Traffic today was absolutely dreadful," Sparx said, a cheeky smirk on his face.

With one more member in tow, the group finally spotted the library in the distance. Classic bit his lip. What good would trying to hide in a building do if they had golems on their tails? He looked back at the golems, narrowing his eyes at their red orbs. There was no way he could smash them all without drawing more attention.

'Looks like they're powered by magic, so maybe banishing might work on them?' Classic thought, but quickly shook his head. *'No, that still wouldn't do any good considering more would quickly take their place. If only... Wait!'*

Classic's eyes went wide and he turned to the group. "I have an idea! Ember, could you cast a reflect spell to hold these guys off for a bit?"

"Why?" Ember asked, looking back at him.

"I have something I want to try, something that might get these guys off our tails for bit!" Classic said.

Ember bit her lip, looking back at the horde of golems chasing them. This wasn't exactly the best time to be experimenting with ideas, but

as she gazed back at the determined look on Classic's face...

She let out a soft sigh. *'I thought I got over this already...'*

"...Alright. I'm not sure how long I can hold them off, though, so I really hope you know what you're doing," Ember said, a look of apprehension on her face.

"Don't worry, I promise nothing bad will happen to us," Classic said before looking at Legend and Cynder. "You guys go on ahead. We'll catch up shortly!"

Cynder's eyes carried a hint of apprehension as she looked towards Ember. Ember gave a slight nod, her eyes slightly narrowed. Cynder sighed softly before she nodded too. With that out of the way, Classic and Ember skid to a stop, turning around to face the golems. Sparx hovered beside them, raising his fists.

"Sparx, you should have gone with them. We can handle this!" Classic said, looking towards Sparx out of the corner of his eye.

"Yeah, that's what you said the last time the loop ended earlier than normal," Sparx said, looking down at Classic with a smirk. "Besides, *someone* has to be here to make sure you two stay safe in case whatever you have planned goes awry."

Classic shook his head, though he couldn't suppress a smile. "What would I do without you, Sparx?"

Sparx grinned. "Probably take a lot longer with the baseline, but who knows?"

As the two friends bantered with each other, Ember stood forth and began tracing runes in the air. Not a second later, she clapped her paws together and quickly spread them. A reflective barrier enclosed the street in front of them, stopping the golems in their tracks. Ember groaned slightly and bared her fangs as the golems proceeded to use their arsenal of weapons to try and break the barrier.

"Spyro, could you please hurry up? I'm not sure how long I can hold this!" she said, narrowing her eyes at the golems.

Classic smirked. "Don't worry! This shouldn't take long at all!"

With that, he opened up his command line. Smirking, he began targeting as many golems as he possibly could. Sparx glanced at him with a raised eyebrow. "Spyro? What exactly are you up to?"

Classic smirked. "You'll see, Sparx. For now, let's say quite a few of these golems are about to be drafted!"

Sparx blinked, but Classic was already targeting one of the golems.

"MagicCrafterGolemModelT1000-golem

Sign in as guest?

[#!]_"

'Well, there's his first mistake. What kind of idiot puts a guest account on killing machines?' Classic thought, a smirk on his face. To the others, he appeared to be moving his paws about in thin air.

"[#!] Sign in as guest.

Welcome, guest. Current level of access is minimal.

[#!]_"

Classic grinned. ' *Not for long!'*

As Classic began moving files around, Ember managed to glance back for a few seconds, her forelegs beginning to shake as the golems continued to ram against the barrier.

"Spyro, I don't mean to sound pushy, but could you *please* hurry? I'm — *ahh!* " Ember gasped, having to turn all her attention back to keeping the force-field up.

"Hold on, Ember! Just keep it up just a bit longer!" Classic said. Looking back down at the command line, he scowled. *'Come on! There has to be something I can exploit on this! No matter how much stuff I move around, it doesn't seem to be doing any permanent damage!'*

"[#!]Move equilibrium. emt to the administrator's directory

1 item already being transferred. Move anyway?

[#!] Yes

Moving equilibrium to adminisrafghtyrytegwtu—error

Welcome to administrator directory. Current level of acc—

File transfer complete.

Welcome back guest. Current level of access minimal.

[#!]_"

Classic blinked. *'Huh? If I move more than one item at once, I get transferred to the directory I tried to send it to until it finishes transferring.'* He gave a toothy grin. *'Finally! Something I can work with!'*

"[#!] move equilibrium. emt to shoulder directory

Moving equilibrium. emt to shoulder directory

[#!] move combat programming to administrator's directory

1 item already being transferred. Move anyway?

[#!] Yes

Moving combat programming to adminisrafghtyrytegwtu—error

Welcome to administrator directory."

'There we go. With how these things are practically death machines, that should take a good long while to transfer,' Classic thought, his paws already flicking through the programming.

"[#!] access target functions

Target functions accessed. Current target: pure dragon-waterian hybrids."

Classic blinked. *'Waterian hybrids? Why do I feel like I've heard the name 'Waterian' before...?'* He quickly shook it off. He could think about this later.

"[#!] set target to Magic Crafter Golem Models

Setting new target to golems

Target set."

With that, Classic looked up from his command line and smirked. Among the horde of golems, the lone one that he'd targeted stopped dead in its tracks. Not a second later, its red orb turned a shade of purple before it swung its saw blade at the nearest golem. As that golem exploded, the purple-orbed golem charged at another one.

Sparx's jaw dropped as the golems started to turn their attention to the lone rogue. "What the heck did you do!?" he exclaimed, looking down at Classic.

"I drafted him," Classic said simply, straightening up as he grinned. "And now that I know their exploits, it should be easy to automate the process."

Sparx blinked and then shook his head. "You know, I still have a hard time remembering you're no longer that dragon who can just charge and breathe short bursts of flame."

Classic chuckled, but it quickly subsided as he looked over to Ember. "You can drop the reflect spell now, Ember! That golem is only going to keep the others occupied for so long, so we need to hurry!"

With a sigh of relief, Ember nodded and the reflective barrier dissipated. Not a second later, they bolted towards the library.

As Classic was 'drafting' his first golem, Legend and Cynder were continuing to keep the distance between the two groups as clean as possible. During this, they noted a weak point in the golems' assault. There were fewer golems coming in from one particular direction, almost as if...

It was Cynder who saw them first.

"It's Sparx, Ihy, and Hunter," she told Legend, catching a glimpse of the smaller party as she launched herself and every golem nearby into the air with her shadow element.

"Got it," Legend replied, freezing his nearby opponents and then shattering them all with a single tail-swipe. "I see them."

That was Cynder's cue to make sure that they didn't get separated from Classic and Ember. Legend would do the same for the party of three. Legend noted that Hunter seemed to be doing rather well at defending the three, but Ihy seemed to be too busy dodging to really help on the offensive front. However, it seemed the cheetah was being slowly overwhelmed. Each round of golems steadily got closer to landing a blow and it was only a matter of time until someone got hit, and at that point it would be all over.

Legend noticed one of the golems raising a saw to strike down Hunter, who was too busy watching the other's backs to be able to react in time. That attack wouldn't go through, not if Legend had anything to say about it.

He struck the attacking golem with his electric breath and yanked it back, shouting, "Get over here!"

The golem was ripped off its feet and launched straight at Legend. Now on his hind legs, Legend stepped into the projectile, claws sparking with electricity as the golem's casing briefly held against his claws...before they rent through the sheet metal, tearing up the mechanical monstrosity and throwing the guts away.

"This way!" he called to Hunter and the others. Sparx wasted no time heeding his brother's advice, with Ihy right behind him.

Hunter blinked for a moment, trying to comprehend what had happened, but decided that perhaps that could wait until they were relatively safe. As he passed Legend, he asked, "You going to be alright?"

"We'll be fine," Legend replied, motioning to himself and Cynder, even as his claws began sparking. "Unfortunately, this is our normal." Then, snarling at the hordes of golems approaching, he declared, "Let us see how you fair!"

With that, he jumped into the air and curled into a ball as a sphere of electricity began to surround him. His eyes flashed once and the sphere let out a pulse of electricity on all sides, zapping all the golems within range. It pulsed again and again and again, until the pulses took on a pattern similar to a high frequency wave. Almost inexplicably, the golems around the sphere seemed to be drawn in. The ones closest to the center were quickly and brutally torn asunder by the constantly changing electromagnetic forces.

As his attack ended, Legend noticed that the golems were a bit warier of getting closer to him and stepping inside his range. Unfortunately for them, they had no idea what his range actually was. He charged, intent on clearing a path to the library.

Classic, Ember and Classic Sparx all darted towards the library as fast as they could. Once they were in range, they spotted the ensuing chaos as Legend tore through golem after golem. Classic faltered, his mouth agape as he watched his twin force his way through the golems in a furious whirlwind of ice. He was quick to shake it off when Ihy darted towards the doors.

"Quick! Everyone inside!"

Upon hearing this, a greater part of the group was quick to make their way to the library's doors. Classic looked back, seeing that Legend and Cynder were still fighting. "Guys! Ihy told us to get in here!"

"You go! We'll hold these guys off for the time being!" Cynder called, ducking under a saw blade before jamming her tailblade into the golem's orb.

Classic frowned. "But—"

"No buts!" Legend said, looking back at Classic. "Someone has to keep these things from tearing this place down. Just hurry up and figure out what's going on!"

Classic looked at them with wide eyes. Legend sent two golems flying with electrical attacks and looked back at him.

"Don't worry! We'll be fine!" he said, ducking under a saw blade and swiping at the golem's feet. "We're used to this! Go!"

Classic was forced into the library as the ground beneath him raised up and pushed him in, blocking the door. He went tumbling backwards, but quickly found his paws again and rushed over to the stone blocking off the entrance. He pounded his forepaws against it, scowling. Rushing over to a nearby window, he watched the onslaught of golems making their way towards Legend and Cynder.

'This is bad!' he thought, having to resist the urge to bust out the window to help. *'There are far too many of them! By the time I bring control over to my side, it'll end up being destroyed in seconds! And I don't have the time to work on the automated process!'*

With a scowl, he looked back. The library seemed to be split off into four sections. Books, movies, magical artifacts...

'Magical artifacts!' Classic thought, quickly rushing over to the wing. *'There has to be something that can help us in here!'*

Classic raced towards the library exhibit, eyeing each artifact in hopes of finding something that could help. Many different artifacts were strung up around the area, some that looked like they could fall apart at any second. Without wasting a second, he brought up his command line and began scanning each artifact. Finally, he came upon what appeared to be a simple shield.

"Self-sustaining barrier enchant detected. Low range. Encases user in a barrier."

Classic read the results of the scan and looked at the artifact with narrowed eyes. *'This might help. If I could just increase the range of this, I could use it to put a barrier over the library!'*

He quickly ran over to it and broke the glass casing it was in. Hoping that the people who ran the library would understand, he looked at the notable cracks in the shield. *'Doesn't look like it'll last long if I attempt to overclock it. There has to be someway I can reinforce this thing so it doesn't break the first few seconds in.'*

Classic paused, looking at the shield for a few seconds as he wracked his brain for an idea.

"...Got it!" he exclaimed, and darted back out of the exhibit. *'Not sure how well this'll work, but it's worth a shot!'*

Classic's claws skittered over the marble flooring as he skidded to a stop in the middle of the area. He looked for the others frantically, head darting left and right, and a small golden glowing ball flew next to him.

"Spyro! There you are! We were wondering where you got off to—"

"No time to explain! Where are the others?" Classic asked, looking at Sparx as he moved closer.

"They're in the books exhibit. Why? What's going— *wha, Spyro!* "

Before Sparx could finish his question, Classic was already off as fast as his paws could carry him. Darting into the books exhibit, he saw the group had spread out and were looking at the books, while Ihy continued to furiously type away on his laptop. Though a bit confused over what was going on, he quickly shook it off.

"Ember!"

The dragoness in question jumped, fumbling with the book in her paws. Turning around, she gave a meek smile.

"What is it, Spyro?" she asked, putting the book down.

"I need your help with something! Come to the main entrance of the library, and quick!"

With that, Classic darted back into the main office, skidding to a stop. Ember was soon to follow, seeing he had already taken out three of his orbs and was levitating a shield in front of him. She blinked.

"What's going on?" she asked, quickly walking up to him.

"You still have enough magic to cast a reflect spell, right?" Classic asked, looking at her.

"Yeah. Why?"

"I'm planning on overclocking this shield relic in hopes of making a barrier around the library to keep the golems out, and I need something to reinforce it and keep the shield from shattering the second I attempt this. That's where your reflect spell comes in," he explained, looking back at the collection of magical objects. "This way Ro and Cynder don't have to keep fighting to keep them out."

Ember glanced towards the window just as a golem went flying past and was quickly followed by a black streak. With a determined glint in her eyes, she looked back at Classic.

"Alright, I'm in. I'm not sure how long I can hold it, but I'll try for as long as I can," Ember said, already getting ready to write the runes in the air.

"Well, if what I have planned works, you should only have to hold it for a few seconds," Classic said, starting to levitate the three orbs around the shield.

Ember raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean? Won't this thing shatter once I take the reflect spell down?"

"Not if I rewrite one of the orbs to maintain it," Classic said, glancing sideways at her.

Ember blinked. "You can do that?"

"I *think* so," Classic said, though he didn't sound very confident. "From what I understand, orbs are just an easy way to use enchants for those who normally can't use magic. All I need to do is wipe them blank and I should be able to easily install a new enchant." He looked back at the orbs. "I need you to cast the reflect spell so I can copy it to an orb. The second orb will be to keep these levitating, since we don't have a stand to set all this up, and the third will be a buffer to help it handle the overclocking."

Ember paused, staring at Classic with wide eyes. As much as she'd liked him in the past, never *once* had she thought she'd hear

something so technical sounding coming out of his mouth. Shaking her head, she gave Classic a concerned look. "Have you ever done this before?"

"Well...not on orbs *specifically* ," Classic said, giving a meek grin. "But I *have* been learning how to write enchants into armor, and I managed to magically hack a golem, so this can't be too hard, right?"

He gave a nervous chuckle and focused back on the magical objects in front of him. Though his face curled in apprehension, it wasn't like they had any other choice.

Drawing runes in the air, Ember cast her reflect spell. A small lucid shield formed around the cracks in the artifact, magically patching them, and another thin reflective coating appeared around it for good measure. Nodding, Classic looked down at his command line, quickly deleting the existing enchants on the orbs. As the orbs' colors changed to a dull grey, he took a deep breath.

'Alright... You can do this!' he thought, and began writing the magical coding down.

"[#!] copy reflect. emt

[#!] paste to enchantment orb. 1

Processing... Copy to enchantment orb. 1 successful."

Classic watched as one of the orbs changed from a dull grey to a snowy white. He nodded at Ember and she dropped the reflect spell. As predicted, the translucid barrier around the shield held.

"Perfect," Classic said before looking at the next orb.

"What should I do now?" Ember asked.

"Stay here," Classic said, glancing at her. "If something goes horribly wrong, I'm going to need you to cast another reflect spell to keep us from catapulting through a wall."

Ember blinked, gulping as she backed away slightly. Nonetheless, she got ready to write the runes at a moment's notice. Classic quickly began to write his telekinesis spell onto the second orb. The orb quickly turned from a dull grey to a light blue. With that done, he turned to the third orb.

"[#!] Add OrbDriver to AoEShield

Processing... Process complete. Install successful."

Classic took a deep breath. *'Alright, make or break time.'* He turned to Ember. "Get ready with that reflect spell."

As she gave a nod, Classic turned his attention to the shield. Taking another deep breath, he began focusing his magical power into it. A faint purple aura surrounded him as he held his paws out, closing his eyes and concentrating. The shield began to glow brightly as the third and final grey orb started to turn purple. Classic gritted his teeth as the shield trembled in the air. A stream of magical energy formed around the three orbs, connecting each one to the shield. He opened his eyes slightly.

'Okay. I think this as much as I can put in without causing it to explode,' he thought, looking down at his command line. *'I* really *hope this works!'*

"[#!] Activate AoEShield-MagicalArtifact."

In an instant, a bright flash filled the room, causing Classic and Ember to close their eyes and stagger back.

Legend ducked under a saw blade and retaliated with an earth-spiked tail strike. The golem toppled over and Legend growled as another began heading his way.

Suddenly, a bright flash erupted from the windows of the library, bringing the raging battle to a halt as both sides stared in

amazement. Not a second later, a translucid shield encased the surrounding area of the library and any golems that were in the way were rebounded back outside of the barrier.

Cynder looked around with wide eyes and mouth agape. Noticing the golem in front of her was also looking up at the strange barrier, she took the opportunity to slam it to the ground, shattering its orb.

The sound of shattering crystal snapped everyone back to their senses. Legend was quick to duck under a saw blade before he let loose a stream of electricity, shattering the orb of the offending golem. Looking towards the library, he smirked.

'Somehow, I get the feeling Spy is behind this,' he thought, then turned back to the few golems inside the barrier. *'In any case, I still have a few of these guys to deal with. Still, nice to know I'll be able to get something resembling a break.'*

"It worked! *It worked!* " Classic exclaimed, jumping up and down as he watched his creation float in the middle of the library. "I can't believe it actually worked!"

Ember rubbed her eyes, trying to rid the multicolored dots from her vision after that bright flash. She shook her head and looked at Classic jumping up and down with a wide grin on his face. Try as she might, she couldn't suppress a giggle as she held a paw over her mouth.

Hearing this, Classic immediately snapped back to reality and stopped bouncing, his cheeks turning bright red. Turning to Ember, he scratched the back of his head and gave a cheeky grin. "Uh, I mean, I *knew* it work."

This comment only succeeded in making Ember giggle louder. " *Sure* you did," she finally said after taking a deep breath, walking over to him.

Classic averted his eyes, glancing at her sidelong. "Um, thanks for the help, by the way."

"No problem," she said, giving a grin. "I'm just glad I didn't need to cast a second reflect spell."

"Yeah." Classic chuckled nervously.

There was a brief silence, which was soon broken by the sound of rocks collapsing. Classic and Ember looked over to the main entrance of the library to see Legend and Cynder walking through, both eying the strange floating shield with wide eyes.

"I suppose that's what's causing the giant dome out there?" Legend asked, turning to Classic.

"Yep," Classic said, a proud smile on his face. "We couldn't just let you two fight hordes of golems while we were cramped up in here, after all."

Legend gave a slight smile and began looking around. "Where are the others?"

"They're in the books section," Ember said, motioning to her left. "We're trying to see if we can find anything about what's going on. Ihy said he'll explain the rest once we're all together."

Legend paused, raising an eyebrow. "Why? Can't he just fix all this, being the admin and all?"

"From what he said, not at the moment," Ember said, turning towards the books exhibit. "He hasn't told us why, though. I think he'll explain it once we're all there."

Legend blinked and turned to Cynder, who also had a blank look about her. Shaking his head, he turned towards the books exhibit with narrowed eyes and stepped forward. "Alright, then. We

shouldn't keep him waiting. After all that happened today, I think he owes us an explanation..."

(A/N: Well... Things escalated rather quickly here. Maybe Legend just has terrible luck when it comes to fused loops, or at least peaceful variant loops? Either way, it looks like their relaxing vacation is over for the time being.

A lot of people seemed confused by the way Malefor acted last chapter. Again, I'd like to point out that variants can change more than just the setting. Character's personalities and backstories can be vastly different from canon and, even then, the variants they're put in can also change their personality rather drastically from the norm. It's kind of like the loop AbZ wrote a while back with a good Malefor who taught Spyro the basics of using Convexity without it causing you to go insane.

Anyways, with that explanation out of the way, we're moving on to the final act of this arc. That doesn't mean the loops are ending, though. Not by a long shot. We still have a lot more stories to tell, and quite a few people have already guessed what our next mega-arc is going to be after this one. Though, to be fair, it was kind of obvious. :P

Either way, looks like Ihy will have a lot of explaining to do in the next chapter. Can the group find out what's going on and put an end to it? Find out next time!

Remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and if your interested in submitted your own loop snippet to this, make sure to check out the Forum!)

History lesson (!)

(Fused 1.1 continued) (Feat: Toko, AbZ, Ukelele, and Mosshadow) (Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx.)

The sound of metal scraping against the reflective dome outside echoed throughout the library. The four dragons entered the books exhibit without a word, finding the group of loopers looking through the history section. Legend didn't give them much attention; his eyes rested on the being who was supposed to fix stuff like this. Walking up to Ihy, he narrowed his eyes.

"Well," he said flatly, expression unwavering, "mind explaining what's going on?"

"Hey, don't take that 'high and mighty' tone with me!" Ihy snapped, glaring at Legend. "Don't forget, you're talking to the guy who runs your branch!"

"That's exactly why I'm asking," Legend said, unflinching as he moved closer. "You said that this was supposed to be a peaceful variant to introduce us to our otherworld counterparts." Legend stared Ihy in the eyes. "With that in mind, may I ask you *why* Malefor—who, should I remind you, was supposed to be *written out* of this loop—has set his golems upon this town with the intent of killing everyone in sight?"

Ihy backed off, his eyes darting away as Legend got in his face. He let out a frustrated groan. Though he didn't like the idea of one of his loopers getting the better of him, he also knew that they all deserved an explanation. The cat was out of the bag now.

"Fine," Ihy said with a flat frown. "If you let me get back to my laptop, I'll explain everything."

Legend's expression remained unchanged, but he complied and walked over towards Cynder. Ihy took a deep breath as he got back on his laptop, then let out a sigh.

"Alright," he said, noting how all the loopers had turned their eyes on him. "Remember how Yggdrasil basically works like a giant supercomputer?"

The Legend loopers blinked, exchanging confused glances before looking back at Ihy. The Classic loopers merely nodded.

"Well, like any computer, it can be hacked," Ihy said, looking back down at his laptop. "And, unfortunately, a rogue admin with too much time on his hands decided to do just that."

"'Rogue admin?' " Ember asked, blinking as she looked at the loopers near her. Each of them shared her bemused expression.

"Yeah," Ihy stated, looking up from his laptop. "Basically, they're a bunch of arses who like causing trouble for the hell of it. *Thankfully,* they have enough common sense not to cause any more damage to Yggdrasil, lest it end up wiping out a branch, but that still doesn't stop them from pulling stuff like this for the shits and giggles."

"Can't you do anything about it?" Legend asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Unfortunately, not at the moment. When the rogue altered the variant to bring Malefor back into this, he also messed with my way back to Yggdrasil where my terminal is located," Ihy explained, looking back down at his laptop. "My laptop can only do minimal stuff, like scanning for things and *maybe* editing in a weapon if we're lucky." He sighed. "Unfortunately, unless I can override whatever the hacker did to disable my teleport function, there's not much I can do."

"Aren't you, like, some sort of deity, though? Even if you can't get to your terminal, can't you easily smash those guys out there no problem?" Legend Sparx asked, floating up to Ihy's face.

"Normally, yes. Even though we admins aren't normally supposed to interfere with in-loop affairs, when rouge admins are involved, all bets are usually off," Ihy said, then looked down. "However, we usually need special permission to use our full strength, and even *if* I'd had the foresight to apply for it beforehand, I probably would have been vetoed. Partly because of this supposedly being a peaceful variant..." Ihy glanced away. "...And partly because I'm not exactly *big* with the other admins at the moment."

"Why? I mean, I can kind of see why..." Legend Sparx began, but a sharp glare from Legend Spyro cut him off.

Ihy sighed, looking back up at the group. "I did something...kind of frowned upon by other admins before your loops started and, as punishment, they took my in-loop powers for the time being."

"Why? What did you do?" Cynder asked, raising an eyebrow.

Ihy paused, glancing away and frowning. "It's...it's not important. In any case, other than serving as a warning system, there's not much I can do right now."

A silence fell over the group as they exchanged glances, some frowning, some raising eyebrows, and the rest just narrowing their eyes. Finally, Legend looked at Ihy. "What about the other admins? You said that there were others who watch over other worlds."

"That's just the thing," Ihy said, looking at Legend with a frown. "They're all busy watching over their own worlds. Unless someone specifically contacted them, I doubt they'd even notice what's going on here."

Ihy crossed his arms and glanced away. "Besides, if they found out that I let a hacker get the better of me and turn a peaceful variant into *this* while I'm already on their bad side, I'll probably lose my job as an admin. I'll be forced back into grunt work as admin assistant, and I can't go back to that!" he exclaimed, his eyes going wide as he raised his paws. "They pawn almost *all* their work onto their

assistants! If you think doing an admin's job is hard, try doing the work of two! Or six!"

"Well, maybe you *should* go back to being an assistant!" Classic Sparx said, narrowing his eyes.

"Sparx!" Classic Spyro said, looking up at him with wide eyes.

"Hey, I'm just saying," Classic Sparx said, looking back down at his Spyro. "We've barely known this guy for a few months, and in that time all he's really done is lay around on a couch drunk out of his skull half the time. On top of that, he's already gotten into trouble before our loops started *and* is partially the reason why all this is happening!" Sparx turned to the rest of the group. "I don't know about you guys, but I'd feel a *lot* safer if the one in control of our worlds was someone who actually knew what they were doing!"

Ihy looked away at those words, his gaze falling to the floor. Classic narrowed his eyes at his Sparx, who got the hint and quickly looked away. Hunter crossed his arms, placing a paw to his chin as he looked at Ihy with narrowed eyes. Finally, Legend stepped forth.

"Listen, playing the blame game isn't going to get us anywhere. What's done is done," he said, looking around at the group as he walked in front of them. "Right now we should focus on the problem at hand. Ihy, you told us to come to this place because you were hoping to find out more about what's going on, right?"

Ihy looked back up at Legend, his forelegs crossed, and his gaze drifted thoughtfully upward. "Yeah. When the rogue admin sent me a note, he mentioned how he 'tweaked an ancient civilization' to bring Malefor back in. I get the feeling there might be something about that which could help us while going up against him."

Legend nodded. "Alright. Any idea what the civilization was?"

"Not really, unfortunately. Mostly, we were just looking for any books that had a psycho purple dragon in them," Ihy said, giving a shrug.

Classic paused, looking upward as he placed a claw to his chin. *'Ancient civilization, huh? Odd. For whatever reason, I can't help but feel like that rings a...'*

"Wait!" he blurted out, stepping forward. "While I was hacking one of the golems, I noticed its targeting system was set on 'pure dragon-Waterian hybrids.' In my world, there's a legend about a Great Sea Dragon, who...um..." Classic paused and glanced away, his paw on his chin.

"The Great Sea Dragon is said to be the ancestor of all dragons in our universe," Ember interrupted, stepping forward. Resisting the urge to chuckle when Classic muttered 'Yeah, I knew that!', she continued.

"She was the first one to discover our realms when she swam here years ago with her babies on her back. No one is sure why she made such a trek—some say it was because her homeland was nearing its end—but the swim exhausted her beyond her limits. She passed away on Dragon Shores, and it's said her children are the ancestors of all modern dragons," Ember explained, her voice becoming a bit somber as she came to the end.

"Yeah, that," Classic said before turning back to Ihy. "I think it's safe to say that the Waterians are the civilization we're looking for."

Nodding, Legend turned to the others. "Alright, then. It's the best lead we've got so far. Everyone, split up and start searching. At the very least, even if we find nothing, we'll have some time to rest for the battle ahead."

Cold air filled the room in the factory as Malefor stood in front of a monitor. On the screen, several golems were making their rounds, blasting their way through the few dragons still attempting to play hero. Malefor closed his eyes, giving a soft sigh. So far, those four young dragons were the only ones who had managed to put up a decent fight.

'Good,' he thought, looking back at the screen. "Soon... Soon, this nightmare will be over."

With that, Malefor began cycling through different visions of his handiwork on the screen, unaware of the door creaking open behind him. Ripto poked his head in, a flat expression on his face.

'I'm getting tired of being cramped up in here. Having golems exact revenge is nice and all, but I think it's about time that...!'

Ripto jerked back, his eyes going wide at the sight of the screen. He blinked, his jaw dropping at the images of brutally wounded and bloody dragons. Several seconds passed in shell-shocked silence, but he quickly shook it off. *'Come on, Ripto. Why the hell are you shocked? This is what you wanted! Revenge on those stupid dragons! ...Right?'*

Ripto shook his head, taking a deep breath. *'Yeah. Those...those dragons had it coming, anyway...'* He blinked, grabbing his forehead. *'But I didn't expect it to be this brutal...'*

Nonetheless, Ripto put on his trademark scowl as he made his way into the room. He opened his mouth to speak, but all that came out was a gasp. He staggered back, staring at what had appeared onscreen next. The picture showed a bloody and beaten yeti strung out upon the ground, a smaller yeti shaking him, his wide eyes flooding with tears. Another image replaced it, this time showing a beaten kangaroo and monkey struggling to stand as they glared at the screen. As a saw blade came into view, the image quickly changed to that of a penguin, who—

Ripto placed his hands over his eyes, a scowl of disgust on his face. Growling, he quickly ran in front of Malefor.

"Malefor!" he yelled, clutching his scepter tightly. "What the *hell* !? "

Malefor blinked as he looked down at Ripto. "What is it, friend?"

"Why the hell are the golems targeting things other than dragons!?" Ripto asked, gritting his teeth.

Once again, Malefor blinked. "Oh, yes. As sad as it is to say, it would appear that some seek to stand in the way of our revenge against the hybrids." He looked back at the screen. "I don't fully understand why, but I'm not entirely happy about it, either. Regardless, in order for our plan to continue, all that try to stand in our way must be eliminated." He paused, taking a deep breath. "As such, necessary sacrifices must be made."

The screen flickered once again, this time showing a scene that caused Ripto's eyes to go wide. Raptors were scattered across the streets, their bodies slick with blood, though some still attempted to stand. His jaw dropped as one of the raptors still standing, back-to-back with a Peace Keeper, charged towards the screen. A saw blade came into view as the raptor got closer. Then, as the blade swung down, the image changed to something else.

Ripto growled, nearly snapping his scepter in rage as he turned back to Malefor. "Stop it!" he yelled, jumping up to get his attention. "Stop this right now!"

Malefor looked at Ripto blankly. "What's the matter, friend? Did you not want revenge on the dragons?"

"Yeah, but not like this! Not if other species, and *especially* my own kind, are getting killed in the process!" Ripto exclaimed, raising his staff up to Malefor.

Malefor closed his eyes, shaking his head. "I understand your anger. I, too, wish they would not throw their lives away. But it is their own fault for siding with the hybrids." He opened his eyes, his unnaturally large pupils focused on Ripto. "As said, they are a necessary sacrifice."

"A necessary sacrifice... Was it a necessary sacrifice for the Waterians to violate you just so they could benefit as a species?"

At this, Malefor's pupils shrank to the size of a pin. How could his only friend compare him to a sea serpent? "Ripto, please, you must understand—"

"There's nothing to understand! It's clear that you're a lunatic who won't let go of something that happened a million years ago!" Ripto yelled in his face. His voice lowered dangerously, his claws itching to fire his scepter at Malefor. "I did nothing to stop you, not only because you forced me to stay by your side, but because I realized that, if you killed off the dragons, I'd be a free raptor. But I'd rather run for the rest of my life if my freedom requires the blood of my own kind."

Malefor could not withstand the metaphorical knife that had plunged into his heart, and Ripto didn't hesitate to twist the blade. "But you don't care either way, do you? As soon as I'm done talking, you're gonna brainwash me again and shut me up. Fine. Before you do that, let me ask you a question: What's the difference between you and those sea serpents you ramble about?"

It was then that Malefor finally returned Ripto's onslaught with a seething anger. "You have never met a Waterian. If you did, you would know that they're all self-righteous bastards who would do anything to advance their species, no matter the cost."

Ripto knew that, by now, he was living on borrowed time, so he finished Malefor off with a retorting echo. "You've never met yourself. If you did, you would know that you're a self-righteous bastard who performs genocide on his own species so he can 'cleanse and restore' the *glorious* dragons." Ripto began to chuckle. "You hilarious, delusional hermit, you're even worse than those serpents. If you're trying to 'fix' your species, it isn't recommended to wipe 'em all out and start over."

The room was now deathly silent. On one side, Ripto knew that he would either die or be enslaved for the rest of his life. At least he would do so with a clear conscience. On the other side, Malefor struggled to hide his embarrassment, a scowl etched deep into his

face as his pale scales began to glow red. Finally, he decided that his friendship with the raptor was null and void, and proceeded to remove all rebellion from Ripto's mind, leaving him a blank slate ready to be written on. " **Listen to me** . We are no longer friends. You are my servant, nothing more. You will monitor the production of golems and, every day, you will report your findings. Do you understand?"

His final smirk of defiance waning, Ripto raised a claw to his head in salute and replied in monotone. "Yes, Malefor."

With that, Malefor narrowed his eyes and watched Ripto walk away. As Ripto left through the door, Malefor paused, looking downward for a few seconds.

'I know what I am doing is right. It is for the good of dragonkind. Once the Waterian hybrids are gone, then they will all see.'

With that, he turned back to the screen. The battle continued to rage on, the golems slowly gaining ground. A smile appeared on Malefor's face, but it fell as a nagging feeling tickled the back of his mind.

'Those four younglings... Exactly who were they?' He let out a sigh before cycling through the images onscreen. *'With all that has happened, I nearly forgot about them. Let's see if those nanobots have found them yet.'*

Malefor began flicking through the images again, this time setting his signal on the nanobots. Several just showed the same ongoing battle throughout the realms. However, when the screen flickered to show what appeared to be a translucent dome over a building, Malefor raised an eyebrow.

'A shield? I've never seen a shield spell like this before,' he thought, quickly reminded of the purple dragon that had been using telekinesis to toss his golems around. *'No, that can't be. He was just a child...'* Malefor paused and his expression flattened. *'A child that was destroying my golems like they were target practice.'*

Malefor flicked through the images again, watching his golems trying in vain to break through the shield. He scowled, but kept flicking through the pictures. Several seconds passed and Malefor's scowl deepened as more and more images onscreen showed the nanobugs merely resting on the shield. Finally, when the screen flickered to show marble flooring in a giant room, a sly smirk appeared on his face.

'Good,' Malefor thought. *'At least one seems to have made it in before the barrier went up.'*

He imposed his will on the nanobug and it began to fly through the room. It wasn't long before a floating shield orbited by three orbs appeared on the screen. It didn't take much for Malefor to deduce that this was what was causing the barrier outside. He let out a sigh. There wasn't much he could do about it at the moment with this tiny nanobug.

Then he heard the sound of voices coming from where the books were kept. Malefor narrowed his eyes before sending the bug towards that section. When it came upon the ones who the voices belonged to, Malefor's eyes went wide. On the screen, those same four young dragons were held up in the library with a few other beings.

'Who are these dragons...?' Malefor wondered, blinking. He quickly shook his head before looking back at the screen with narrowed eyes. *'No matter. They will be working for me soon enough.'*

Malefor commanded the nanobug to fly down to one of the dragons —the black dragoness, to be specific. It came to rest down on the back of her neck. A sly smile appeared on Malefor's face as his eyes gained a purple tint.

Cynder paused, glancing upward with a raised eyebrow. As she went to scratch the back of her neck, Malefor's jaw dropped. He was quick to command the nanobug to fly away before it was accidentally smashed.

"Does anyone else feel a draft in here?" Cynder asked, looking around at the group.

Malefor could only look at the screen in disbelief as the others shrugged in response.

"How?" Malefor said aloud, his eyes glued to the screen. *'Who are these dragons!?'*

He shook his head, glaring at the screen. If one of these dragons could resist his control, then there was a high chance the others could as well. Malefor scowled. He wasn't entirely sure what was happening, but for now, at the very least, he could keep a close eye on these beings.

The group had been searching through books for a short while now and the tension in the air was palpable. So far, they hadn't found much that told about the Waterians, and Ihy was having no luck trying to use his laptop to look through the loop's coding, either. Legend put a history book back on the shelf. It had some interesting content on the relationship between a dragon and a dragonfly, but it wasn't what he was looking for. Shaking his head, he turned back to the group.

"Any luck?" he asked to no one in particular.

When he was met with a resounding negative, Legend sighed. This was going to take a while...

Classic expression was flat as he glanced through the books, eyeing titles like *'The Great War between Breeze and Land'* and *'The Ruins of Skelos: A History of Humans'* with a dull look in his eyes. Taking a deep breath, he glanced back at the way to the main library. Pausing, he turned back to the group.

"Hey, is it alright if I go check on the dome? Considering there's a chance it could break at any time..." Classic said, a hopeful look in

his eyes.

"Sure, just be careful," Legend said, not taking his eyes off a book.

With a grin, Classic darted out of the books section. Any reason to get away from books was good enough for him.

Heading back to the main room, he slid to a stop and looked at his creation. Classic grinned. There were no signs of any additional cracks in the shield. He sat down, staring at his creation.

'I still can't believe I managed to pull this off,' he thought, a smile on his face. *'Elora was right. It* is *one of the greatest feelings ever.'*

Classic laid down on the floor, almost hypnotised by the floating orbs orbiting around the shield. He took a deep breath, closing his eyes.

A loud bang echoed out and Classic's head shot up, his gaze darting back towards the stairs. He paused, then got up.

"Ro, that you?" he asked, raising an eyebrow. Met with silence, Classic paused. "...Ember?"

Once again, he was met with silence. Classic scowled, hunkering down slightly. "Sparx? Is that either of you? Hunter? Ihy?" he asked in rapid succession.

There was no answer. Classic narrowed his eyes. There was a chance that had just been the wind knocking something down, but at the same time, there was an even greater chance that they weren't the only beings in this library. A puff of smoke escaped his nostrils. If a golem was in there, that meant that they could have found a way in and were planning a sneak attack. Or maybe there had already been a golem in the library when he'd set up the dome. Either way, Classic knew he had to deal with this before it got the drop on them.

Cautiously heading over towards the staircase, he paused. There was a little alcove under it. Carefully poking his head out from behind

the corner, Classic saw what appeared to be a supply closet. He let out a quiet exhale. Getting into attack position, he slowly headed over to the door and placed his paw on the handle.

"Get ready to become scrap metal, you walking hunks of junk!"

"GAAAAAAAH!"

A loud crashing sound rang out as Classic jumped into the closest, scattering cardboard boxes and papers everywhere as he tackled something to the ground. He raised his paw, getting ready to strike. When he saw what it was he'd tackled to the ground, however, his eyes went wide. The red dragon under him cringed, his eyes screwed shut and his forelegs held in front of his face.

"Flame!?" Classic blurted out, quickly getting off him.

Flame opened his eyes slightly, blinking as he moved his paws away from his face. "Spyro...?"

Classic blinked. At the sound of his name, his mind quickly recalled things from his pre-awake memories. He and Flame were apparently acquaintances, and Classic was often suckered into whatever 'paranormal' investigations Flame cooked up. Not a single one of them had turned out to be real, but Classic kept getting dragged into them each time. The idea of finding something paranormal had been just too good to pass up. Other than that, though, they had never really become friends, per se.

"Spyro!" Flame exclaimed, getting to his paws. "Thank goodness you made it out alive! I thought I was the only one left!"

Classic blinked, tilting his head. "What are you doing here, Flame?"

"I spend a good amount of my free time here," Flame said, looking downward as he scratched the back of his head. "I like reading a lot of paranormal books here...and I occasionally I help organize the books when an extra paw is needed." Flame glanced back up at the

raised eyebrow on Classic's face. "Hey, I don't knock you for your magic obsession! Besides, it kind of saved my life today, if it wasn't blatantly obvious!"

Classic blinked before shaking his head. "Hey, I'm not trying to poke fun at you. I'm just a tad weirded out, is all," he said. *'Especially since baseline Flame wouldn't go anywhere near a library...'*

Flame was silent for a few seconds before he tilted his head. "What are you doing here, though? Considering you tend to cringe whenever you even *think* about reading a book..."

"We needed someplace to hide," Classic said, glancing back. "And this was the only place that *wasn't* being overrun by golems."

Flame paused before raising an eyebrow. "We?"

"Yeah. There's a whole group of us here at the moment, my bro included," Classic said, placing a paw to his chin. "Wait... You said that you help organize the books here, right?"

"Yeah. Why?"

"Well, maybe you can help us with something," Classic said as he headed back out of the closet. "Come on," he said, glancing back. "I'll explain on the way."

Flame paused, poking his head out of the supply closet and looking around to make sure it was safe. Classic glanced back and rolled his eyes before continuing on. Flame was quick to follow behind. As the two dragons made their way into the main entry hall, Flame saw the odd magical device in the middle of the room and stared wide-eyed.

"What is that?" he asked, stopping to stare at it.

Classic glanced back to see Flame looking at the device in awe. He raised his paw, rubbing his knuckles against his chest as he smirked.

"Oh, that? That's just a little something I cooked up to keep the golems out."

"You made that!?" Flame exclaimed, looking at Classic with wide eyes. "I knew you were practicing magic, but I didn't think you were at *this* level!"

Classic grinned, rubbing the back of his neck as he closed his eyes. "Well, to be honest, I did have a *little* help. Besides, you'd be surprised at what a dragon can do when their life is on the line." Classic turned back to the books section. "Anyways, enough talking about my amazing magical shield. The others are waiting for us."

Walking through the archway, the two dragons made their way into the books section. Legend turned his head, raising an eyebrow when he saw the additional dragon returning with Classic. As Ember turned towards the doorway, she gasped at the sight of Flame.

"Hey, guys! Look who I found!" Classic said, walking towards the middle of the room. "You guys remember Flame, *right* ?"

Taking that as a hint to check his in-loop memories, Legend quickly did so. There wasn't much to remember, though. For the most part, his pre-awake self only knew Flame as 'that dragon his brother occasionally hung out with.' He glanced over to Cynder, who merely shrugged. Assuming that meant she had no memories of him, Legend turned back to Classic and Flame.

"What was he doing here?" he finally asked, raising an eyebrow.

"For the most part, hiding in the supply closet," Classic explained, a cheeky smirk on his face.

"Hey, it was the only place I could think to hide!" Flame said, frowning. Taking a deep breath, he looked at the group. "So, what are you guys looking for?"

"Info on the Waterians," Classic replied. "I know that seems weird right now, but we think that it could help," he added as they reached the history section.

Not quite sure what was happening, but willing to play along, Flame chuckled nervously. "Well, I think I've found your problem. You're looking in the wrong section. Most books here only glance over the Waterians, even though they are perhaps the single greatest influence on our culture. The thing is, since dragons only started writing after the fall of Waterian civilization, all we really have are myths and legends about them. In fact, one of the legends is that we adopted writing from them after a couple generations together. Something about dragons never being able to hold a stylus."

Flame then walked off to the mythology section, his claws clicking across the hardwood floor. About ten minutes later, they heard a slight squeak and he returned pushing a cart full of books.

"These should help," he said, handing out different tomes.

Legend took the one handed to him, checked the Table of Contents, and flipped to a section titled 'The Fall of the Waterians.'

Clearing his throat, he began to read.

"Many great and wonderful deeds are recorded in the state of our histories. But one exceeds all the others in tales of greatness and valor. For these histories tell of a great and mighty power which made their home beneath the Deep Waters. Strong in knowledge and the mystic, they ruled uncontested and great was their reign. Miracles never seen before or since were common trifles to ones such as they. And so, with pride and a burning desire, they searched to know the unknowable.

But the gods do not appreciate mortals encroaching upon their territory. So didst they send down a messenger of their wrath, a spirit of Convexity, whose fury destroyed the home of the serpents and banished them from their home beneath the waves. But, to spare

others the outcome of the gods' ire, the survivors sealed the spirit away in a vessel and returned it from whence it came, ne'er to return."

With a date and location, even if Ihy couldn't alter any code, he could still do some fact checking. To the background sound of rapid, rhythmic tapping, the loopers and Flame found other versions of the tale, some more obviously skewed in bias than others. Classic found a book and took it off the shelf to silently read through it.

"While the tale of the Waterians has been a popular fixture for hundreds of years, they are unlikely to have ever existed. The presence of a powerful and technologically advanced underwater civilization would have left its mark upon the land the same way our modern civilization builds roads and fells timber.

The population density required to construct the fanciful machines spoken of in the myths, some of which exceed our own abilities, would be massive for a supposed island or bubble. This nation would have required the resources of land to obtain materials such as wood and ore. While it is conceivable that they could sustain any local forestry through careful management and spellcasting to increase growth, ore and fuel would need to come from colonies on the continent.

In addition, the legends claim that their entire civilization was destroyed in less than a day with the incitement of a wrathful spirit or a natural disaster. For the vast majority of the population to be killed, and the ruins to be sunk deep into the ocean floor, a massive amount of power that has been rarely seen would be required.

Even then, if the Waterians had been struck down by a spirit, a powerful earthquake, or perhaps the accidental detonation of a powerful bomb, how would this account for any colonies or vessels that would be in transit to supply its industry? It is unlikely that these ships or colonies would be affected, unless a massive tsunami destroyed them, which then leads to the question of why no other

legends from the multitude of other prehistoric civilizations note seismic activity during this era."

Classic raised an eyebrow. There was nothing to really note, but it did bring up some good points. Still, it didn't seem like it had anything major or relevant to what was going on, so he placed the book back on the shelf.

"So," Flame asked, turning to Classic. "How long do you think that barrier will hold?"

"Don't know," Classic replied, turning around. "There are a lot of variables. But it should hold for as long as we need it to, and I'd like to manually take it down just so it's less likely to blow up on us."

"It could blow up?" Flame asked in worry.

"Not likely," Classic replied. "But, then again, I set it up by overcharging an artifact. So I'd rather be safe than splat, if you know what I mean."

The following solemn silence was interrupted when Ihy swore under his breath, catching everyone's attention. Most of them started to crowd around him. Being the only non-looper of the group, Flame just watched on in confusion. Suddenly he flinched, scratching the back of his neck.

"Ow," he muttered, frowning. "Bug bite."

While the group continued to try and get a good look at Ihy's laptop, Ember was the first one to ask the obvious question. "What's wrong?"

"That asshole spliced the Waterian's code with both Aperture and Rapture! As if one wouldn't be bad enough!" Ihy sank into his chair and his head hit the table with a hearty *thunk* . "I'm so dead." A book slid off the table.

"Are we supposed to know what those are?" Hunter asked as he bent down and picked up *Truth and Fabrication: Myths for Young Dragons* .

"Long story short, bad news," Ihy groaned. "Take a civilization, remove any sense of morality, add superpowers and a desire to be more: that's Rapture. Aperture is the place that made GLaDOS. She is..." Ihy took a moment and shook himself. "It was bad. She started out normal; a lover of this company exec... And watched the company change him. Then she got her brain uploaded into a computer in an extremely horrible way. She was probably insane by that point. Then they added other personality programs. Because Dissociative Identity Disorder, why not? They put that in charge of the facility and acted surprised when it killed them all. And that ass took the worst parts of Rapture and Aperture and put them together!"

Ihy's head rose off the table about an inch, only to drop back down again. "Fuck, this was supposed to be my friggin' vacation. I only get one of those damn things!"

"Is there any good news?" Classic Sparx asked hotly.

"Well, it's technically not Malefor doing this," Ihy mumbled into the wood. "Not that it makes much of a difference."

A silence fell over the group as they took in what Ihy had said, the only sound coming from the golems roaming around outside. Finally, Hunter glanced around at the group.

"So...what are we supposed to do now?" he asked, scratching his head.

"I think that's pretty obvious," Classic said, smirking. "Whether or not it's technically this Malefor guy behind all this, he's the one mass-producing the golems out there and trying to destroy the town." Classic briefly got on his hind legs, curling one of his forepaws into a fist and slamming it into the flat palm of his other. "So, it stands to

reason that all we need to do is take out Malefor and things will go back to normal!"

"Now, hold up there!" Legend said, quickly stepping forward and looking his brother in the eyes. "Cynder and I will deal with Malefor. You and the others will stay behind and try to keep safe."

"What? And what makes you think I'll agree to that?" Classic asked, tilting his head with an annoyed expression. "You should know by now that you're not going to get rid of me that easily!"

"This isn't a game, Spy!" Legend said, narrowing his eyes with a scowl. "You may have taken down several powerful foes in your baseline, but Malefor is on a completely different level! I already explained to you how he's one of the few non-loopers in baseline that still gives us a challenge."

"All the more reason you should have more backup when you do fight him," Classic retorted, a cocky grin on his face.

Legend growled. Though he shouldn't have been surprised by this point, once again his loop brother was proving to be one of the most stubborn dragons he had ever met. As Legend merely stared at him while trying to think of a comeback, Flame eyed them both, a confused expression on his face.

"Um, excuse me?" he asked, catching the attention of the bickering dragons. "What the heck are you two talking about?"

Both Spyros blinked before glancing at each other awkwardly. Classic gave a nod and Legend took a deep breath. Like it or not, Flame had unfortunately been dragged into all of this and, as such, if he was going to survive this loop, he was going to need context on what was going on—and be informed of the loops in the first place.

Turning back to Flame, Classic twiddled his claws before glancing at Legend with an awkward smile. "So, you wanna tell him, Ro?"

"Get over it," Legend said, a flat look on his face. "There's no point in avoiding the truth now, and the world won't fall apart just because you told one outsider." He glanced at the window, hearing the golems stomping around outside. "In fact, it's kind of already falling apart..."

Classic blinked before looking over to the loop's admin. "Uh, Ihy?"

"Busy..." Ihy responded, staring intently at his laptop.

As Flame aimed a glazed glare at Classic, he finally gave in and his expression went flat. "Okay, okay, don't give me that dirty look. It gets kinda hard to tell the truth when you've been doing the exact opposite for almost three months."

With a heavy sigh, Classic started to explain. "There are universes beyond the one you occupy, and this universe is one of many that we've been dropped into."

"So…you're all aliens?" Flame asked, tilting his head.

The group balked at this conclusion, with the exception of Ihy; the tapping of his keyboard was his only response.

"…If that's how you wanna see it," Classic said, giving him an odd look. "Normally I would tell you that I'm a dragon and you should get your eyes checked. But being dropped into other universes where I end up a female, or a dragon that grows based on how much it hoards, or even a hairless monkey, convinced me to stay a little ambiguous on the subject of what I am. What I can tell you is that, before everyone started universe-hopping, I called myself a dragon and so did everyone else here, except for Hunter."

Choosing to leave no stone unturned, Flame prodded for more answers. "And Hunter was a…?"

"He was a cheetah," Classic said, a flat look on his face.

"Oh, alright," Flame said, giving a meek chuckle. "I take it that nothing really changed compared to the universe you came from, right?"

"Wrong, actually… Whoa, wait a minute." Classic raised an eyebrow. "Are you taking me seriously?"

"Yeah, why not?"

"Because I let you call me an alien while I told you that I've experienced being a female dragon," Classic said flatly, looking at Flame curiously. "Doesn't any of this bother you?"

Flame took some time to respond. "It does bother me...a lot. But you can't be lying to me, since you guys know that alien that I met in this library. If you know him, then what you're saying makes some sense."

At this, Legend raised his head, looking at Flame with wide eyes. "An alien? In this library?"

"Yep. He said his name was Malefor and he asked me about Waterians," Flame said, placing a claw to his chin. "Then he started crying about something and he did this really weird thing with his eyes to make the room longer and force me away from him. It was freaky as hell."

Freaky as hell indeed. Legend and Cynder glanced at each other, exchanging confused looks. Malefor had a lot of powers, but what Flame described sounded almost unreal. On top of that, he'd said that Malefor had been crying. The Malefor they knew was a calculating, overconfident adversary of dragonkind. Never once had they expected to hear of him showing emotion like that. Legend's expression became more stoic as he listened to the explanation, his understanding of what they were dealing with slowly slipping away.

"Could I finish explaining, please?" Classic asked, an annoyed expression on his face.

"Oh right, sorry," Flame said, giving a meek smile and awkwardly scratching the back of his head. "You were saying that something changed between this universe and your universe?"

"Not something, everything," Classic said flatly. "I met my twin near the beginning of summer."

Flame blinked, looking at Classic blankly. "…What?"

"That was my reaction too," Classic said, a slightly amused expression on his face. "Turns out he's actually me from another universe."

Flame continued to look on blankly, occasionally blinking. Classic sighed.

"Basically, when we get dropped into universes, we have to deal with a difference in circumstances, as well as the history that we have in that particular universe," Classic began, looking at Flame intently. "That's how stuff like this happens. But you know what, since I'm pretty much losing you at this point, let me just repeat the important stuff. We come from different universes; we often find ourselves in our original universe with our memories intact, something we call looping; the universe I come from is called my baseline; and my twin's baseline is where Malefor comes from. …And that's it, I guess. You got that?"

"Sure… I guess I can follow this." Flame's tone wavered with uncertainty, but there was currently no other explanation for the events occurring outside the library. If he could believe that aliens existed, then this shouldn't have been hard to stomach, either.

"Now then," Classic said, turning to Legend with a smirk. "As I was saying, we should stick together if we're planning to take down this Malefor guy." He grinned, a sly glint in his eye. "Besides, I take it from the expressions on your faces that *this* Malefor isn't what you're used to. All the more reason to have some backup in case something goes horribly wrong."

Legend let out a small groan, looking at Classic with a scowl. "That argument goes both ways, you know," he said, shaking his head. "Malefor could be even more dangerous this loop, which would put all of you at a bigger risk. It's best that Cynder and I tackle this alone, so no one else gets hurt."

"Okay then, if I can't convince you to take backup, think of it this way," Classic said, still smirking slyly. "This barrier isn't going to hold forever. We can't stay held up here until things calm down. Besides." He grinned, getting on his hind legs and crossing his forelegs. "I think you know me well enough by now to know that, even if you leave me behind, I'm just going to tag along anyways, regardless of what you say. I'm pretty sure the same goes for anyone else here. So, you can either have us tag along with you so you know we're safe, or have us follow you anyway and risk getting caught. Your choice."

Legend's expression went flat. He may have had a retort for his loop brother's arguments, but this he was willing to believe. With a defeated sigh, he looked at his brother.

"Fine," he said, narrowing his eyes. "But let us engage Malefor first. If things seem like they're getting too dangerous, I want you and anyone else that joins us to run. No ifs, ands or buts."

Classic smirked and Legend took a deep breath. By now, he knew all too well what that meant. Closing his eyes, he made a mental note to keep a sharp eye on him as soon as they got to Malefor.

"Now then, we need to formulate a plan. Anyone have any ideas?" Legend asked, looking around the room.

As most of the group made their way over to Legend, Cynder paused. She looked over towards Ember, who was sitting at the far side of the room, her eyes wide as she took everything in. Cynder frowned and made her way over to her.

"Ember?" she asked, sitting down next to her. "You alright?"

Ember jumped slightly, snapping back to reality. She looked at Cynder with a forced smile. "O-oh? Yeah. I'm fine... This is just a lot to take in, is all." She took a deep breath, eyes closed as she let her head hang limp. "To think... Just this morning it was like any other day."

Cynder looked on with concern. "You know, you don't have to come with us," she said, placing a paw on Ember's shoulder. "You could stay with the others who evacuated if you're scared..."

"N-no, it's fine," Ember said, forcing a relaxed look.

Cynder raised an eyebrow. "Aren't you scared, though?"

"Well...yeah, of course I am," Ember said, looking down and placing a claw on her heart-shaped necklace. "But I figure, as a looper, I can't just sit around and do nothing. Besides, I feel like I should get somewhat used to the idea of fighting alongside others." She glanced at Cynder, forcing another smile. "I mean, what happens if I'm forced into one of these situations? Or if I'm in a loop where I have to deal with this on my own? I need to be prepared for anything, I suppose..."

Cynder frowned as Ember closed her eyes and took several deep breaths. It pained her to see her loop sister so unnerved, on top of everything she was saying. It sounded too much like what a young dragoness from her baseline would say. She closed her eyes, part of her wishing the innocent dragoness she'd first met didn't have to experience this.

"Though…" Ember raised her voice, looking at Cynder again. "Can I tell you a secret?"

Cynder raised her head, looking at Ember curiously.

"Even though I'm scared...part of me is also excited," Ember said, a small, more genuine smile on her face. "I've never really gotten to go on an adventure and fight bad guys like my Spyro does. Even when I

looped into his role, it still felt like they were mostly his adventures. Most of it boiled down to sheer dumb luck when it came to me getting through them. This is the first time I feel like I can actually do something to help, that I'm actually part of an adventure."

Cynder blinked, though a small smile creased her face. Even though Ember may have lost some naivety in this loop, that childlike sense of wonder was still within her.

"Ember?"

"Yeah?"

"Keep that attitude as long as you can. Ancestors know that it's hard to get it back once you lose it."

Before Ember could ask Cynder if she was alright, she had already retreated into the group. Ember followed suit. As they prepared their suggestions, it was clear that the Spyros were not budging from their original proposals.

"I'm telling you, if we all piled on top of that jerk, he wouldn't stand a chance!" Classic argued.

Keeping from raising his voice, Legend vetoed that notion. "I know that, since this a fused loop, Malefor may have lost the pure sadism he had in my baseline, but that doesn't mean that he is any less dangerous! Flame, you said that he had some screws loose, didn't you?"

Flame was thrust into the spotlight and he stammered into the discussion. "W-well, I don't know if he was crazy. All I said was that he cried. Before that, we were having a hypothetical conversation about what happened to the Waterians, and then he said that he was the one who brought them to ruin. But if the Great Sea Dragon brought dragons to land ten thousand years ago, that would mean he's at least that old... That's impossible, right?"

"He was sealed away in a spork. As long as that spork's intact, he can potentially live forever," Ihy said. Closing his laptop, he got up and looked at the group with a serious expression. "Regardless, while I may be cut off from my terminal, I was able to find a few interesting tidbits with what I've got." Ihy crossed his forelegs. "For starters, while I haven't been able to pinpoint Malefor's exact location, I did find out that the golems seem to be coming from the Magic Crafter realm."

Classic's eyes went wide and his jaw dropped, gasping as his mind went into overdrive. *'Elora!'*

"Well, what are we waiting for!?" he exclaimed, stepping forward with a determined look on his face. "Let's go and teach that Malefor a lesson!"

"Now, hold on," Legend said, walking in front of Classic and narrowing his eyes. "We can't just charge in elements blazing. We may be loopers, but that doesn't mean we don't have our limits." Legend shook his head. "Besides, as Ihy said, we don't know where Malefor actually is."

"So? Sitting here isn't going to do anything, either!" Classic shot back, narrowing his eyes at his loop brother. "At least if we go there, we'll have a better chance of finding out!"

"You know, I'm normally not one to rush into things blindly, but..." Ihy stepped in front of the two. "Classic does have a point. With me unable to access my terminal and no other leads to go on, it's our best bet." He looked over the group present. "Besides, even if we go back to where the others evacuated, I doubt the local authorities would be keen on the idea of what appears to be a bunch of children handling this."

Legend let out a low, disgruntled growl. As much as he hated to admit it, there was some truth to that line of logic. "…Even still," he said, looking at Classic and Ihy, "we'll be leaving ourselves wide open for an ambush if we go that route."

"So? We have that massive shield thing Ember and I made," Classic said, looking back towards the main hall. "If we need to rest, we can just set it back up."

"But it wouldn't protect us from an ambush should we not already have it up," Legend retorted, narrowing his eyes. "Besides, you said it could go out at any time. How do we know that won't happen while we're resting, leaving us open to attack?"

"Ro, just trust me!" Classic said, meeting his glare with a scowl. "We're not getting anywhere sitting here and arguing about it. So far we only have one lead, and the longer we stay here arguing about it, the more those golems will pour out and tear up any other cities out there."

"I know that!" Legend said, shaking his head. "But rushing in without a plan is foolhardy! And how are we supposed to get there with all this going on in the first place?"

"There's the portal transit system."

The room went quiet, all eyes turning to Ember. She shuffled around nervously at the sudden attention shift, taking a breath to calm herself.

"My father works for the portal transit system this loop. From what I've gathered, it works similarly to how the portals normally work in our world," she said, looking around at the group. "There must be a portal transit set up somewhere in the city. If we find it, we should be able to make it to Magic Crafters in no time."

A silence fell over the room, the group exchanging glances as they let the words sink in. Classic smirked at Legend, whose expression remained blank. Just as Legend stepped forward to say something, a resounding crack echoed throughout the library, making everyone jump. On high alert, Legend took a fighter's stance, while Classic looked out into the main hall. His jaw dropped and he looked back with a sheepish smile.

"Uh, yeah. We may want to go with Ember's idea for now."

"Why?" Legend asked, turning to him.

"Because we're not going to have time to think of another one!" Classic said, motioning Legend to look out to the main hall.

Legend turned and blinked, staring at the glowing red ball where the shield had once been.

(A/N: So, things have certainly gotten a lot more interesting. Finally starting to learn some secrets about the Waterians, and an unawake Flame has gotten wrapped up in all this. The shield keeping them safe doesn't look like it's going to last much longer, either, so no time to waste. Can they make it to the portal transit system? Find out next time!

As for notes about the chapter, there's not much for me to personally say. I was a bit leery of comparing the Waterians to Aperture and Rapture. I've only played the Portal series myself, so... And even then, I don't like comparing things to outside franchises, as it feels...I don't know. AbZ was the one who wrote that and, considering the number of Portal references with it so far, I'd figured it was alright. Still... Eh, maybe I'm just over-thinking it.

Also some unrelated news: expect updates to be slower than usual for a bit. We finally worked through the backlog of chapters that were made weeks ago and, with the bout of writer's block I went through recently, there hasn't been too much progress on future chapters so far. We're pretty much going to be 'posting as we go' for now, so...yeah.

Anyways, as always, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and remember to check out the official FF.N Forum if you'd like to submit your own snip to the compilation.)

Giant Enemy Crab (!)

Fused 1.1 Continued (Feat: Toko, AbZ, Ukelele) (Beta-Read by Riverstyxx)

Legend's gaze jumped in turn to each of the different members of the group gathered around him. Classic and Flame, Ember and Ihy, Hunter and Sparx—both of them. None of them could take a hit. Not like he and Cynder could, anyway.

He knew Classic could fight, even if he didn't want to admit it, and Ember could be called on for support if need be. Hunter was at his best with ranged attacks, or, barring that, someone to step in front of him and guard. Classic Sparx seemed to have that protecting power, but could only use it four times before he fell. Flame was basically a non-combatant, and Legend didn't know what his brother Sparx was packing in his own subspace. If there was anything in there that could help, he would need time to set it up. As for Ihy, he had no idea of the Admin's fighting skills.

Best to plan for the worst, then.

He and Cynder would take the front and rear guard, respectively. Classic and Ember would guard the sides. Hunter could pick targets off from the center and Classic Sparx could hold off on his healing shields until a death-blow or a surprise attack. But that still left their sides very open.

Classic could normally handle himself in one-on-one fights, but that was because of his superior speed, range and evasive capabilities. From what Legend had seen of Dragon Kata, it wasn't something Classic was too familiar with. He was too hesitant, too slow. And in this battle, where he'd practically be locked into a single position... But for whatever faults Classic had, Ember had only been training for a few months. She was strong, dedicated, and had proven already that the lessons hadn't gone to waste, but without help, they would

both get hit far too often. Classic Sparx would use up his powers, and then the formation would collapse.

That wasn't something he could allow to happen.

"You fixed my armor, right?" Legend asked Classic. At the other dragon's nod, he added, "Good as new?"

"Better," Classic replied confidently.

"Good," Legend said with a nod, pulling the armor out of his subspace. "Put it on. You and Ember are guarding the sides."

When Cynder heard this, she pulled out her own gold armor and gave it to Ember.

"What? That's for—"

"We're going to be travelling in a large group including at least one non-combatant and a long-ranged fighter, and we're going to be surrounded. I don't know how fast we're going to be able to move, so I'm assuming slow. That means being assaulted from all sides. *Anyone* with melee training *has* to guard those who don't. Otherwise we get overrun and die. I'm not going to let that happen." Legend's voice was biting. There had been loops when, though physically young, he had been placed in charge of troops in battle.

"Then what about you?" Classic asked coldly.

There was a shadow of a smirk on Legend's face as he pulled out his silver armor. "I've got something of my own. Cynder, front or back, your choice. Classic Sparx, trust me on this— *don't* guard us. Save it for if they call in a surprise attack. Hunter, stay in the center and pick off any that look like they're charging up for something big. Sparx... If you've got something hiding, now would be a good time. Flame, I don't know what you can do. Stay in the center and don't wander." Then he turned to Ihy. "Where's the nearest portal?"

Ihy glanced up from his laptop, giving a nod before he glanced back down and began tapping away. The shield began to emit an odd humming sound and the group tensed up. Ihy looked up, frowning slightly.

"It's not far off, but I get the feeling those golems will be guarding the place like Fort Knox if it does lead to Malefor." He closed his laptop and got up. "We should be careful."

Giving a nod, Legend turned to Classic, who was eyeing the golden armor oddly. Noting Legend's gaze, he sighed and began to slip it on. Legend turned to the rest of the group and each gave a nod in response. He looked back just as Classic put the last piece of armor on. Classic gave a small frown, looking over it awkwardly. Glancing over to Ember, he noted she was having decidedly more trouble with the set she had been given.

Ember stood awkwardly stiff as Cynder helped her get the last piece of armor on. Holding her breath, she had trouble standing as the armor squeezed her like a rubber-band. Taking a few small breaths, she glanced over it awkwardly.

"Uh… It's a bit tight."

"While we're at it, mine feels like it's going to slip off at any moment," Classic said, a flat look on his face. "Are you sure this is going to help us?"

"Just give it a minute," Legend said, looking between the two. "It should readjust itself soon."

On cue, the armor sets began to glow, conforming themselves to the new body structures. Ember took a deep breath, now able to breathe again. Classic looked down at his armour with wide eyes. Despite the seriousness of their situation, Legend couldn't help but chuckle.

Quickly shaking it off, he looked back to the group. "Everyone understand the plan?"

Getting multiple nods in response, Legend turned towards the main hall. "Alright, then. Everyone! Let's move!"

The golems were gathered a short distance from the entrance to the library, the dome over the building blocking whatever little access they had. Then, without warning, the shield began to dissipate and they wasted no time in charging forward. Just as they got close, the doors flung open and a wave of earth shot forth, sending them flying back. The group of loopers charged out, Legend leading as everyone fell into their positions.

Legend used his earth element to push a path through the golems, while Cynder guarded their backs. Classic and Ember stayed on the sides, using a combination of reflection and levitation spells to keep any golems that may have avoided the earth wall from sneaking in. In the middle of the configuration, Hunter attempted to pick off as many as he could, while Flame did his best just to keep himself together.

Ihy ran on his hind legs, precariously opening his laptop. "If we keep going this way, we should get to the transit system in no time!"

Giving a nod, Legend continued to lead their way down the path, the group holding their positions as they ran. The configuration appeared to be holding up well, but as they continued to push their way through, Cynder glanced back and noticed an immediate problem with their plan.

"Spyro!"

Both Spyros turned their heads to see a huge cluster of golems chasing behind them. Legend scowled and looked forward again, continuing to use the earth to plow his way through.

"This is bad!" he said, narrowing his eyes. "If we keep this up, we're going to end up with half the invasion force surrounding the transit system when we get there!"

"I don't suppose flying is out of the option, huh?" Flame asked, his voice cracking slightly.

Legend glanced up and let out a low growl at the sight of several golems equipped for flight combat patrolling the skies. "I'm afraid not. At least, not if we don't want even more of them chasing us."

The group grew tense as they ran, drawing the attention of every single golem they passed. Classic glanced back at the mob chasing them every chance he got, a scowl on his face. Suddenly, a light bulb went off in his head. He smirked and quickly glanced over to Legend.

"I have an idea!" he said, eying the many side-streets they passed. "Tell me, Ro, do they have sewer systems in your world?"

"Not that I know of. Why?"

"Then you're going to have to trust me!" Classic said, opening his command line. "I'm going to make a smokescreen to get these golems off our tails. Once I do that, I want everyone to follow me!"

"Spy! Are you sure about this?" Legend asked, glancing over with narrowed eyes. "We're barely able to push through as is! If we break positions now—"

"Trust me!" Classic said, glancing at him with a frown. "If we make it there with the entire invasion force on our tails, it won't matter *what* positions we take!"

Legend frowned, but the sight of the mob of golems chasing behind them hammered home the truth of Classic's words. "...Fine. As soon as the smokescreen starts, we swap positions," he said, looking forward. "I hope you know what you're doing, Spy."

Classic nodded and focused on his command line. Placing a good amount of magic into it, he conjured a massive veil of fog behind them. With a nod, the two purple dragons swapped positions.

Classic led everyone down one of the alleyways as the golems stumbled around obliviously. Before long, the group come across a manhole cover and Classic wasted no time in using his magic to pry it open.

"Quick, everyone down here!"

Those who knew what the sewers were used for exchanged awkward glances, but one-by-one they all reluctantly complied. As the last of the group made their way down, Classic followed, pulling the manhole cover back over the top like nothing had happened.

"This must be from the *old* part of town," Flame noted as they walked next to the foul waters. "Otherwise this wouldn't have worked."

"Well, it worked and now we're going to get to the transit no problem," Classic said with a shrug, plugging his nose.

"Actually, slight problem," Ihy said, running a two-layered map on his laptop. "The transit system requires its keystones to be anchored deep in the earth, and a solid connection all the way up. You can't exactly get that with this system under it. The closest exit point will still have us making a two-block sprint to get to the plaza where the transit system is. And we don't know that there aren't golems already down here."

"Still better than having the entire army on our tails," Classic shot back. "Just tell us which way to go and we'll take it from there."

"Fine, fine," Ihy said, a disgruntled frown on his face as he turned towards one end of the tunnel. "This way should take us to the closest exit. There aren't that many twists and turns, so it should be next to impossible to lose track of where we are." Ihy shook his head before pinching his nose. "Everyone, just hold your noses."

As everyone took the admin's advice, the group reluctantly made their way down the sewer system.

The factory flickered with an uneasy coolness as Malefor stared at the monitor's screen. He watched on silently, unable to make heads or tails of what he had been observing. These 'loops' they kept talking about, he didn't quite understand. Nor could he fathom how some of the group knew his name and spoke of him as if he were a familiar foe. All he could make of it was that this group was far more powerful than the other dragons his golems had fought so far, and that fact alone had him on edge.

Watching as they went through the sewers, he was slowly lost in thought. While it was true he could send his golems down there after them, they had already proven themselves sufficient with dealing with them, and, in such close corridors where they would be funnelled into single-file lines, it would be easy for these 'loopers' to bowl right through them. Malefor closed his eyes.

They were coming for him in hopes of stopping his act of vengeance against the civilization that should have never existed. They had to be working with the Waterians, and that alone was reason enough to consider them a threat. Reopening his eyes ever so slightly, he glared at the monitor. If he wanted to deal with these loopers, he was going to need something more powerful than his standard golems.

Malefor stood unmoving as a purple aura softly emanated from him. He would *not* accept defeat again, especially at the claws of whelps. If they wanted a fight, who was he to deny them?

The manhole cover popped open and Legend poked his head out, observing the area for any signs of enemy activity. He paused before looking back down into the sewer.

"All clear."

One by one, the group slowly pulled themselves out of the sewer system and took deep breaths, happy to breathe fresh air again. Ihy shook his head, looking over the group with a frown.

"Come on, everyone. We don't have any time to lose!" he said, closing his laptop. "One last mad dash and we should be there."

"Right," Legend said, giving a nod to the group. "Everyone, fall back into position."

Complying without complaint, the group reformed its tank-like circle as they ran down the street, alert and ready to send any golems flying at a moment's notice. However, as they dashed down the road, something became readily apparent. Cynder raised her head, looking around at the activity on the streets. Or rather, the lack of activity.

"Something's up," she said, looking at Legend. "We haven't encountered a single golem so far."

Legend glanced back at her before looking around at the area as they ran. Just as she had said, in contrast to the small force that had been chasing them earlier, not a single golem walked the streets. Legend narrowed his eyes and steadied his nerves.

"I don't like this," he said in a near whisper. "Something is definitely up…"

Despite any uneasy feelings he may have had, the transit system was rapidly approaching on the horizon. The others' faces lit up at the sight of it, but Legend wasn't about to let down his guard.

"Everyone, be careful," he said, looking back towards the group. "This is far too easy. There's a high chance we're walking into a trap here."

Hardly a second after the words had left his mouth, a low humming sound pierced the air. Legend skidded to a stop, raising his wings to signal the others to do the same. The humming grew louder and it didn't take long before the source of the sound revealed itself. With a loud crash that kicked up a billowing dust-cloud, something slammed

into the ground not far ahead of them—something far bigger than the golems they had gotten used to.

As the cloud cleared, their jaws dropped as the large metallic thing sprang to life. Walking on four crab-like legs and possessing two pincers on the front, the giant golem was roughly the size of a house, bearing several recessed areas on its body that signalled more advanced weaponry. Classic gave a cheeky grin.

"First one to make the obvious joke gets a poke in the eye," he said before getting into a fighter's stance.

The mountainous arthropod thought little of Classic's wisecrack, firing a searing blast of magma at the group. Without hesitation, the loopers broke formation to avoid the puddle of boiling lava that now occupied their previous location.

Classic looked down at it with a sheepish grin. "Well, this brought up bad memories."

Legend only shot a warning glance at his loop brother, hoping he wouldn't bring up a certain incident. What mattered now was the safety of the non-combatants. "Hunter, find a place for Spy and his friends to hide. Sparx?"

"Yeah?" both insects quipped.

" *Both* of you. You have to hide too." Legend said, giving them a stern look. "Spy's Sparx, I want you to use your damage nulling powers to protect everyone. My Sparx, you should go to because..."

Legend Sparx crossed his arms, looking at his brother with a scowl. "What? You think I can't pull my own weight? Need I remind you who was with you on your adventure long before you became a battle couple with Cynder?" Legend Sparx smirked, raising his hand as he pointed to himself. "Why, I'll have you know that- *AAH!* "

Sparx ducked under another blast from the golem, before looking at Legend with a sheepish grin. "Actually, I think you got this covered. Hang in there bro, I'll be rooting for ya'!""

Legend shook his head, quickly watching as his Sparx with darting down the street.

The new golem wasted no time in barrelling toward both Spyros and Cynder as Hunter led the others down an empty alley. Its hopes of crushing them under its massive weight were met with failure as it slammed instead into a building and left a large crater. As it recovered, Legend took the time to remind his counterpart of his previous command.

"Spy, I told you to go with your friends!"

"And I'm telling you to stop treating me like a wimp!"

Cynder looked at them both with a scowl on her face. "Ancestors, can't you two work together without bickering!?" Another blast of magma forced her into the air, and she pulled a loop-the-loop to dodge it before looking at Classic. "Would it hurt to listen to him at least once?" She then turned towards Legend. "And he also took you down before your darkness gained control. He's not made of glass!"

As more blasts came forth from the crustacean tank, the street oozed with lava and the loopers escaped into the air, taking caution to lay low lest they attract attention from the skies.

Cynder glanced at the two Spyros once again when they were out of harm's way, the scowl still on her face. "This is no time for arguing!"

Legend growled, glancing down before looking over to Classic, who glared back at him.

"... Fine, but stay behind us!" Legend said, looking back towards the crab golem. "Let us take most of the brunt of its attacks! While we're

wearing it down, try to see if you can use magic in some way to turn things in our favor!"

Classic scowled. Being reduced to a glorified support role was not exactly something he was big on. He opened his mouth to protest, but didn't get a single word out before he and the others were forced to scatter, dodging a magma blast. Classic growled as he looked back down at the golem crab. The magma flowed down the roads like water, setting ablaze several nearby buildings.

Legend and Cynder regrouped, flying next to Classic as they all looked down with scowls on their faces.

"This is bad!" Legend said, looking towards the not-so-distant building for the transit system. "At this rate, there won't be a transit system to use!"

"We need a way to put out the fire and stop the lava flow!" Cynder said, narrowing her eyes at the flowing magma. "I might be able to use my wind element to slow it down, but I don't think that will be enough."

As the three discussed their game plan, several hatches on the crab golem's top opened up and a barrage of purple beams were fired straight towards the three dragons. Classic's jaw dropped and he turned towards the other two.

"Incoming!"

Legend and Cynder quickly snapped to attention and all three of them scattered to avoid the blast. The crab continued to fire off barrages of Convexity beams as the dragons flew through the air, dodging blast after blast as the sky lit up like a laser-show. Legend glanced down, finally retaliating with an electrical blast, but it merely bounced off the crab's outer shell. He scowled and quickly dove down to avoid a blast of Convexity.

Cynder flew in an arc to dodge the blasts, diving down and pulling up just far enough above the lava to avoid any major harm. She charged forward at the golem's legs, spitting a blob of poison liquid. The poison hit its target and bubbled as the crab glanced down, halting its barrage long enough for Cynder to fly under and behind it.

The crab turned around, attempting to swat at her with one of its massive claws, but Cynder swooped to the side, dodging each swing. As the two Spyros regrouped in the air, Legend saw what was going on below and gasped. Scowling, he darted down with his claws bared, Classic following close behind as he brought up his magic command line.

Cynder continued to distract the golem, darting upwards over a swing, and her eyes went wide as it thrust its claw upward mid-swing. She quickly pulled a back-flip to dodge, but the attempt was in vain and a blunt stab of pain slammed into her back. As she flailed around in the air trying to right herself, the golem put its entire weight into a swing with its other claw. The resounding blow sent her flying into the pavement, her body bouncing off the ground as she skidded to a stop. Dazed, she could only thank the ancestors that she had been lucky enough not to hit any patches of magma.

"Cynder!" Legend exclaimed, his eyes flaring with rage as he picked up the pace.

Before Classic had realized what had happened, Legend's body was engulfed in flames and he shot like a comet towards the golem, slamming into it with the force of a ton of bricks and causing the top of its outer shell to crack. The golem stumbled, turning around and taking a swing at Legend. He quickly pulled up into the air, his eyes focused on the golem as flames flared out of his nostrils.

Classic flew up next to him, eyes wide. "...When this is over, you have to teach me how to do that," he said, smirking. "Not going to lie, that was pretty awesome."

Legend rolled his eyes at Classic's comment before focusing on the golem again. He darted down once again, this time forming ice shards around him and sending them flying at the golem like daggers. Classic grinned, quickly following behind him and joining in the barrage by firing several non-elemental magic blasts. The crab raised its claw, staggering back as it tried its best to block the blows. As the dragons got closer, the crab took a swing at them and they took off in opposite directions to dodge.

They began circling around the golem, pelting it with a combination of ice shards and magical blasts. Legend scowled; at most, all they were doing was denting its armor.

"This isn't working!" he called out to Classic. "We need to figure out a way to break through the shell!"

Before either of them could come up with the next course of action, more hatches on the side of the golem opened up and blasts of Convexity shot out from around it. Their eyes went wide and they quickly pulled up to get out of range. As they let up on the assault, the golem turned its attention back to Cynder. She was just barely getting back to her feet, staggering dazedly. The crab opened its claw, sending a wave of magma towards her.

Legend gaped in horror, quickly darting down and racing towards her. "Cynder! Look out!"

Hearing his voice, Cynder snapped back to reality and her eyes went wide. The lava was already upon her, looming over her in a wave of molten heat. As it crashed down upon her, Legend's eyes went wide.

"CYNDER! NO!"

He stopped in midair, looking on in horror. Though the sight of his mate being showered in lava caused him to mentally shut down for a moment, he snapped back to reality when he noticed the dome-like bubble that was surrounding the place where she'd been. Before he could even wonder what was going on, the bubble popped, sending

lava gushing away from it. Legend was about to dive down to see what had happened, but a Convexity beam missed him by inches and put that idea on hold.

Cynder pulled her wings away from her face, blinking as she looked around. Her eyes went wide at the sight of a trembling pink dragoness before her.

"Ember!?"

Ember let out a deep exhale before looking over to Cynder with a half-hearted grin. "I-I made it," she said, giving a sheepish chuckle. "I wasn't sure if I would, or get the spell up in time…"

Cynder narrowed her eyes, frowning at Ember. "What are you doing here? It's dangerous! You should be with the others!"

"I know I should, but I couldn't," Ember said, turning around as she took a deep breath to steady her nerves. "Maybe if all this happened near the beginning of the loop, I might have. But when I was running away with the others… It just felt wrong." Ember straightened her stance, a determined look on her face. "I want to help. I want to fight!"

"It's too dangerous!" Cynder said, shaking her head. "You've only been training in how to defend yourself for a few months now, and not against bigger enemies like this!" She scowled, though her eyes held nothing but concern. "You've only just started learning the basics of your element, for ancestors' sake!"

"Even so, I still have the barrier magic I learned!" Ember shot back, her stance unwavering. "I managed to save you just now with it! If I hadn't been here…"

"And I am extremely grateful for that, but still!"

As the two dragonesses refused to back down, Classic flew down next to them, his eyes going wide at the sight of Ember standing

there.

"Ember?" he asked, tilting his head. "What are you doing here?"

"I want to help!" Ember said, looking at him with determination on her face.

Cynder shook her head, glaring at Classic. "Where's my Spyro?"

"He's still fighting the golem and wanted me to make sure you were okay," Classic said, looking at her. "He was going to do that personally, but didn't want me trying to fight the golem by myself." He glanced back at the battle, a flat expression on his face.

Cynder took a short breath, glancing over to Ember before looking back at Classic. "Alright. I'm fine, but could you please convince Ember to go back to the others? I'm trying to explain to her that it's too dangerous, but she's not listening!"

"I can take care of myself!" Ember exclaimed, looking at Classic with a determined glint in her eyes. "I'm not just some trembling kid dragoness anymore! I can help! I know I can!"

Classic blinked, looking on blankly. He had never seen Ember like this before. Even though she had been training for a good portion of this loop, Classic found it hard to see her as anything other than the slightly naive dragoness from baseline. However, seeing the determined look in her eyes, it almost reminded him of himself...

Classic smirked, glancing over to Cynder. "Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't you tell Ro that I could help when he tried to do the exact same thing to me not a few moments ago?"

"This is different!" Cynder snapped, closing her eyes and placing a paw on her forehead. "You've had experience in fighting and most of your baseline consists of adventure after adventure! Ember's only been training for a few months!"

"So? We could use all the help we can get, and since Hunter is protecting the others who can't fight right now…" Classic gave a cocky grin.

Before Cynder could respond, an explosion rang out, disrupting their debate as Legend flew up into the air above the golem, his body scraped and battered and his silver armor slightly dented. Cynder gasped, watching as he zig-zigged around Convexity beam after Convexity beam. Though Classic looked worried at first, he soon grinned and looked back at Cynder.

"Listen, we could argue about this until the sheep come home, but every second we do is another second your loverboy risks serious harm," Classic said, voice slightly faltering at the 'loverboy' comment. "So we could keep arguing, or we can rush in and teach this fiery crustacean a lesson!"

Cynder growled at the cocky grin on Classic's face, and glanced sharply away with a sigh. "... Fine!" She quickly looked at Ember, a stern expression on her face. "But stay behind us! Don't try to be a hero. Just use your barriers to protect us when you can."

With that, she flew back up into the air and towards the golem.

Ember looked over to Classic, a small smile on her face. "Thanks, Spyro."

Classic smirked. "No problem."

With that, the two dragons spread their wings, returning to the battle at hand.

Legend scowled as he dodged another swipe from the golem. This game of cat-and-mouse was getting him nowhere. He had to stop this thing, but how? Breaking the shell might work, but then again... The image of another type of golem that he had fought came to the forefront of his mind. Creatures of lava and earth, held together by magic conducted by crystals. From what he had seen of Malefor's

forces in this loop so far, it was likely the same thing held true. So he needed to either blow it up completely, or find the command crystals.

Spy would be better at finding them. Until then, he just had to keep the enemy's attention and hope to get lucky. As the golem made to crush him for the fifteenth time, Legend's eyes narrowed. Time to go on the offensive. 'Time' being the operative word.

Legend flew at the claw and, just before he was hit, activated Dragon Time. He then used the nearest talon as a springboard and vaulted clear of the attack and onto the golem's mechanical limb. He rushed at the behemoth's core, evading a slam from its other leg. Now free to strike, he poured on the speed and launched himself at the metal face, calling upon his earth element as he did.

Legend curled into a ball and smashed into the golem. As it reeled back from the force, Legend used his comet dash to launch himself into the air, then returned to his earth element and curled himself into a boulder. Again, he crashed into the golem and overbalanced it. It wasn't enough to kill it, or even stop it for long, but it was a start.

The ghost of a smile played upon his lips. He could break the crystals...or he could turn the entire thing back into the scrap it had come from. Either one would work. Or not. It suddenly flipped its legs, giving it the opportunity to launch itself into the air and cling to the nearest building. Before Legend could react to this unexpected act of agility, the golem had already shot a blob of magma at him from its perch.

This golem had a terrible habit of pissing him off.

Struggling to focus enough magic for another pulse of Dragon Time, he was rudely interrupted by a boulder to the snout. Steeling himself for the pain of a broken face, he was startled as a purple paw jerked him up into the air, bringing him face-to-face with a painfully smug Classic.

"You know, next time we come across a statue with anger issues, you should think twice before you try to dump me in the kid's corner."

Cheeks reddening, Legend tried to deflect his counterpart's snark. "How am I supposed to react when a rock flies into my face?! For that matter, why aren't I recovering from head trauma right now?"

"Sheesh, do you like getting hurt or something? I blasted that lava with my water breath and I guess lava's light as a feather when it isn't, you know, liquefied fiery death," Classic retorted with a shrug.

He had a point. Of course he was thankful that Classic had stepped in to help, and that they now had a way to defend against the golem's magma shots. Despite this, it was impossible not to feel embarrassed over his reaction to getting beaned by a rock with the consistency of styrofoam. Classic's teasing definitely didn't help, either.

As Legend flew back toward the fray, he looked up toward the bounding golem and a thought occurred to him. Now wasn't the time to stew over his loop brother's obnoxious behavior.

Looking back to make sure Classic was trailing behind him, he called out, "Spy! You can sense magic, right?"

"I don't see why not."

"Good, this fight's been dragging too long for my liking. I need you to find out where the source of the golem's spell is, so we can destroy it and join the others at the transit. Think you can do that?"

"Yeah, yeah, find the weak point. Got it, Ro."

"Oh, and Spy?"

"I know, I'll be careful..." Classic droned, rolling his eyes.

"No, I wanted to thank you for the save back there. You're...doing a lot better than I expected."

Classic's expression lightened a bit at Legend's gratitude, until it fell back into his constant smirk. "No problem. Now let's rip this walking junkyard a new one."

Classic opened his command line, quickly scanning the golem for focal points. As this went on, Legend saw Cynder approaching and was quick to take note of the newcomer next to her. Legend blinked before narrowing his eyes.

"Ember? What are you doing here?" he asked, shaking his head. "You should be with the others."

"Yeah, already been through this, Ro," Classic said, glancing back with a flat expression. "She's helping whether you like it or not, and we don't have time to argue about it."

Cynder gave Legend a nod before glancing over to Ember with a concerned look. Ember frowned, flying forward as she looked at Legend.

"I can help. I know enough barrier magic now to keep us safe. Just tell me what to do and I'll do it," she said.

Legend let out a grunt, looking around the battlefield at the lava slowly oozing outwards, setting ablaze anything it could and melting everything else. Ideally, he could have had Classic use his water element or his magic—Legend had pretty much given up trying to distinguish between the two at this point—to try and control the magma before it destroyed most of the city while Ember covered him, but that was a no go. He needed Classic to be able to pinpoint the focal points that were making the golem move.

Legend shook his head. He didn't like it, but there was no getting around it.

He opened his mouth to say something, but before he could get a word in, a purple beam went flying past the group. They flew to the side, dodging a few more beams that came way too close for

comfort. As they became more frequent, Ember looked towards the crab and summoned a barrier, holding her paws out in front of her. The blast from the beams striking the shield caused dust to kick up, and Ember let out a shriek as she was forced back. Nevertheless, the barrier held strong.

"Ember!? Are you alright?" Cynder asked, flying over to her with eyes wide.

Ember opened her eyes, teeth bared as she held the barrier, her paws shaking as more blasts kept slamming into it. "I'm fine! Just… please hurry up with that plan!"

Legend looked over towards Classic, a stern expression on his face. "Spy!"

"I know! I know!" Classic said, his command line piercing through the dust as a glowing outline of the crab shone through.

Magical residue glowed on the crab; the top joints of its legs glowed a bright yellow, as did the base where its claws were. On top of its dome-like head, where the eyestalks of a crab would be, more glowing yellow orbs shone brightly, and in the very center a giant white glowing orb overpowered all the rest. Classic had to squint just to look at it. Looking back over to Legend, he smirked.

"There seem to be several focal points on its joints, probably to keep it from collapsing in on itself," he said, looking back towards the crab. "There also seems to be a big one in the middle, likely its energy source. Since I seriously doubt we're going to get that far through its armor, we should focus on the obvious weak spots!"

"Alright. We'll split up into two groups!" Legend said, looking over towards Cynder. "Cynder, you're with me. We'll take the legs on the right side."

Receiving a nod from her, Legend turned to Classic and Ember. "Spy, Ember, you two will take the left side."

Classic glanced over, a snide look on his face. "Let me guess. It's because you think I'm not cut out for this kind of battling and that Ember's shields would come in handy for protection?"

"Spy, please try to understand…" Legend said, a concerned look on his face.

"Yeah, yeah. I get it by now," Classic said, smirking. "If you still have a hard time believing I can handle myself, then I'll just have to prove to you that I can." He looked forward at the crab, a confident grin on his face. "Just don't be too surprised when we get our side done first!"

Legend looked on blankly for a few seconds before a small smirk appeared on his own muzzle. Turning back to Cynder and giving a nod, he looked towards Ember, whose forelegs were shaking vigorously as she slowly inched back, though her barrier still held strong regardless.

"On the count of three!" Legend said, looking around and getting various nods in response.

"Three… two… one… GO!"

With that, Ember broke the barrier and the dragons split up into two teams, taking their respective sides. Ember flew close behind Classic, placing a barrier over them as they flew, while Legend and Cynder flew quickly through the air. The crab was quick to divert its assault, primarily focusing on Legend and Cynder. Legend gave a soft sigh at this, but nonetheless kept his stern expression as he and Cynder honed in on the legs.

Cynder swooped under the giant golem's assault. She could see sections where previous attacks had weakened the beast, but so far the combined magic of all the crystal foci had kept it together. Perhaps it would collapse when some were removed? That was a question for later; right now they needed a plan to *get there* .

The heat from the battlefield was making its legs glow white. They needed something to weaken the structure, but what? And then an idea came to her, something her pre-awakened self had mused about when she had been made to study science. Metal that was rapidly heated and cooled in succession became hard, but incredibly brittle. It would take a big hit, but if they worked fast enough, this fight would be over.

"Spyro!" she called out. "I've got an idea! Freeze the legs for me!"

He nodded and dove between the golem's legs. He didn't know what Cynder had in mind...but he trusted her. He spun, faster and faster, channeling his ice element, cooling the air around him until it reached arctic temperatures, then moving faster still. The ground below and near him flash froze, the former liquid splintering and cracking as it contracted.

Then Cynder threw herself forward in an aerial somersault, the power behind her strike magnified by the armor that she wore, smashing through the leg. Coming out of it, she corrected her course and did the same to the second. The third, however, was too far out of position from where she had anticipated, so she broke off her attack to line up again.

The crab stumbled to keep itself steady now that its balance had been thrown off. Opening several hatches in its side, it began firing a barrage of attacks at Cynder. With little time to react, she flew to the side, dodging the attacks as she waited for another good opportunity to strike. Seeing the barrage of attacks aimed at her, Legend quickly charged upward as he was enveloped by flames. The resulting blow from the comet dash knocked the crab off-balance.

Legend flew out from under the golem as it struggled to maintain its footing, firing several fireballs at it. As the crab held one claw in front to block, it quickly swung its other at Legend. He jolted back, a scowl on his face as the golem began to focus most of its attention on him.

As this went on, Classic and Ember flew to the other side of it, looking down at the legs while Ember held the shield steady. Classic looked at the legs through his command line, frowning.

"I don't think I'll be able to use magic to get through its armor, at least, not without drawing it's attention," he said, narrowing his eyes. "Maybe Dragon Kata? I don't think I'd be able to reach it in time if I just hacked away at it, though."

Ember looked over towards him before looking at the legs of the crab. Her eyes widened and she looked back at Classic.

"I have an idea!" she said, flying over towards him. "Do you think you can take over the shield for a bit?"

"Why? What do you have planned?" Classic asked, looking at her.

As they discussed what to do, the crab caught sight of them from the corner of its eye. It turned, aiming a claw at them and firing a missile. Ember's eyes went wide and she quickly moved her paws forward, strengthening the barrier. The missile struck with a resounding thud, kicking up a dust cloud, and the crab went to fire again, but was stopped by a resounding fireball to the face. As it refocused its attention on Legend, the dust around Classic and Ember cleared.

Ember took a few deep breaths, her face tight with nervous tension. Looking back at Classic, she shook her head. "No time to explain. You're just going to have to trust me!"

Classic stared at her, an apprehensive look on his face. His expression went stern and he gave a nod. As he cast his own shield over Ember's, she dropped hers and both of them darted towards one of the legs. Ember quickly latched onto it and the crab took note, beginning to swing the limb in an attempt to shake her off. Clutching tight while Classic hovered next to her, Ember looked back at him.

"We need to keep the leg still!" she said, then let out a shrill yelp as she was almost thrown off.

Classic frowned, his gaze darting around. Looking back down at the lava, his eyes widened. "Got it!"

With that, he began to use his water breath, levitating it in the air as it began to build up. Taking note of this, the crab went to swing at them with one of its claws, but a swift lightning bolt from Legend quickly drew its attention back to him. As the ball of water grew larger, Classic smirked before letting it fall in a massive wave to the ground.

Steam billowed skywards as the lava cooled, hardening into obsidian around the crab's leg. The crab stumbled and looked back, seeing its leg encased in the hardened ground. As it struggled to break free, Ember was finally able to gain good footing on the limb.

"Thanks!" she called, glancing back for a second, then focused back on the joint.

Raising her paw, chi began to rapidly spin around it and she thrust the drill into the crab's armor. Sparks began to fly as the armor slowly gave way, her paw steadily pushing into the magic foci that was keeping it from falling. Classic flew over to Ember, looking on with wide eyes.

"Cool," he said, looking at her. "Surprised I didn't think of that move first."

"Well, you'd be surprised how resourceful a dragoness can be when in the heat of battle," Ember said, giving a cheeky grin.

Not a second later, a resounding crack was heard as the leg broke off and the crab staggered to the side. Classic and Ember quickly took to the sky. The previous two legs Legend and Cynder had severed on the other side, combined with the force of trying to free its other leg, caused the crab to tip to the side.

All four dragons quickly regrouped in the sky as the crab tipped over onto its head, sending molten lava flying as it crashed down. Its legs

moved wildly in an attempt to right itself, its underbelly left exposed. Classic smirked.

'Time to end this,' Legend thought, moving forward. He flew towards one of the legs that had been separated from the body and severed it at the knee-joint. Then, beginning to lift the massive limb, he called out, "Everyone, let's finish this!"

The others' eyes almost popped out of their sockets when they saw what he was trying to do.

"Spy, Ember, take the front! We're going to drop it from on high!" Legend said, looking at the improvised spike. "I'm thinking there's going to be a huge slipstream vacuum behind this thing that will trap whoever is behind it and take them along for the ride. Cynder and I have techniques that mean that *she* will be fine and I will probably just be sore. Either of you might break something." Legend looked back at the group. "This guy isn't going to be the last foe we face. I can fight sore, but I don't want to see anyone fighting with a broken bone."

Classic's eyes hardened before he moved into position to lift the improvised spike. Legend looked over to him. "Spy, guide us in. Let's take out the central gem."

The four dragons lifted the brittle metal to the point where they could start to see the tops of some of the nearby skyscrapers.

"I don't think I can carry it much higher," Ember admitted, her forelegs straining as she scowled.

"Don't worry, Embs," Classic said. "This should be *more* than high enough."

With that, he called his magic back into his eyes and began angling the formation into a dive centered on the golem's 'heart.' Classic narrowed his eyes, the bright white-and-yellow magical residue shining almost like the sun.

The four dragons glared into the slipstream, taking Classic's subtle adjustments to stay on target. Ember noticed Classic look her in the eyes before taking one paw off the missile and showing it to her, then curling in a talon. Ember nodded as Classic began raising his claws. On the third one, they both broke away from the spike, their relative positions and masses canceling each other out as they spiraled off into the air.

Legend and Cynder watched them pass and also let go. As Legend had suspected, a massive air current had picked up, pulling both of them behind the spike. Without hesitation, he pulled in some of the concrete from the buildings around them, encasing himself in a boulder as Cynder sank into the shadows.

The golem had been all but oblivious to its fate at the start, flailing more in an attempt to regain balance. Once the spike was in view, it began scrambling to try and evade death, but the solidified lava surrounding it merely broke off and offered no purchase. In the end, it tried to raise its claw in front of it, but it was half a second too late.

The spike passed just before its outstretched claws and slammed through its damaged armor. It slowed slightly, causing Legend's boulder to act in a manner similar to a hammer, driving the stake further and destroying the central crystal. The back of the spike shattered, some of the shards driving through the boulder and slicing into Legend's scales. Luckily, most of the metal stayed inside and acted as a stop to keep blood from pouring out. Legend sighed, thanking the ancestors the shards had missed his wings.

There was a small explosion of magic as the crystal broke, and the golem let out a death wail. The remaining limbs spasmed for a moment before finally going limp.

Legend allowed his boulder to shatter and pulled himself over the edge to make sure the thing was actually dead. Lava was bubbling up from the wound...and shaping itself into a group of lava golems.

He groaned. "Oh, for ancestors' sake, *come on* !"

The amorphous golems stood tall from the puddle that had been the crab's innards and Legend bared his teeth, preparing his ice element to counter them. Then, from the severed leg's shadow, Cynder sprang upward, a booby-trap of darkness launching the golems into the air. As they went flying, pillars of freezing water were shot at them like sniper fire, effectively turning them into instant statues. It was a shame, really, that such masterpieces had to shatter upon impact. Smirking, Classic held in a snicker.

Then they heard a tiny, " *Woohoo, we're alive!* " from somewhere. Legend subdued a chuckle, instantly knowing who it was. As Ember and Classic landed, none of the four could hold it in anymore and they all began laughing.

As the laughter died down, Classic glanced around, his eyes going wide at the glowing sea of magma that surrounded the field. Looking back over at the others, he gave a sheepish grin.

"Uh, yeah… We should probably take care of this lava first before it sets the entire city on fire," he said, getting up and spreading his wings.

"Got it," Legend replied, mirroring the motion before looking at Cynder. "Cynder, you take everyone and start heading to the transit system. Spy and I will meet you there once we're done with the clean-up."

As Cynder gave a nod, Legend and Classic took to the air, using a combination of water and ice to slow down the lava flow. Glancing at Ember, Cynder gave a nod and the two dragonesses took to the air, heading over to others, who were peeking out of their hiding spot. As they landed, Hunter scratched the back of his head, a frown on his face.

"Sorry we couldn't be more helpful," he said. "I was going to pull out my jetpack to chase after Ember when she snuck away, but when I saw what was going on and how you were fighting, I wasn't sure how

much help I could be." Hunter shook his head and looked at the ground, his body slouching.

"It's alright. We needed you to guard the others, which you seem to have done well," Cynder said, smiling as she looked over the group.

"Hey! What am I? Chopped liver?" Legend Sparx said, crossing his arms and pouting. "Need I remind everyone that I was the one who picked our hiding spot? If it wasn't for me, the golems would have found us right away!"

"Ah, yes. All hail alternate me, god of hide-and-seek," Classic Sparx said, a cheeky smirk on his face.

Laughter filled the air, though Legend Sparx merely scowled and crossed his arms, looking away. As the laughter began to die down, Cynder shook her head and looked towards the road. "C'mon, guys. We shouldn't keep the realms waiting."

(A/N: Short chapter is short. Not much really got done this chapter, other than the characters making it to the transit system. Pretty much it exists because we knew Malefor wasn't going to sit by and let them get to him, and partly because we also knew we couldn't just let them leave the city like it was. Now that they've taken out one of the main forces of the golem attack, though, things shouldn't be too worrying for the town.

In any case, the group is finally starting to work together when it comes to fighting, and Ember's finally starting to apply all she's learned to keep up with the others. Pretty nice, that. We wanted to make it to where Ember didn't feel like she was holding the characters back in fights like so many other action fics use her, and so far it seems to be going well.

With the characters finally at the transit system, will they be able to head to Malefor now? Or will Legend and Cynder get a

crash course in what Classic usually has to go through to reach other worlds? Find out, next time!

As always, leave a review if you like because it really helps us out, and make sure to check out the FF.N Forum because it often has minor details we discuss that we don't put into the fic proper.)

It's-a good!

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments below.)

Legend 29.1:

Eric the Slayer charged through the halls of the underground fortress, glancing around corridors and into rooms as he searched for his brethren. For the longest time, he and the other specter knights had been at war with the apes that dared invaded their homeland of Dante's Freezer. They had no idea how long it had been going on, or why they were attacking in the first place, nor did they care. For millennia they had been bound to this frozen wasteland and, regardless of the reasoning, they weren't about to give it up. All they knew was the grunts were apes, their leader was a purple dragon, and that was all they needed.

Eric skidded to a stop. The underground bunker was eerily quiet. With a frown, he turned. Raising his head, he paused and grasped the handle of his sword tightly.

"I'm telling you, man! These things are endless! Just give it another minute!"

"Sparx. It's been *fifteen* minutes since the last one came out. You're just stalling because you don't want to lose!"

"I'm telling you! Another one's going to charge out any second now!"

Eric narrowed his eyes. He didn't know who those voices belonged to, but he did know that they didn't sound friendly. Readying his sword, he charged down the hallway, making his way to the staircase that led up to one of the many electrical towers on the surface. Racing up the steps, he charged out into the blinding white tundra…and promptly skidded to a stop.

Piled up by the drop-off of a steep cliff, Eric saw a huge mountain of armored specters, each one out cold.

"Aha! Told ya!"

Eric turned to see a golden-yellow orb floating around a purple dragon. Grasping his sword tightly, he charged forward. The dragon looked on with an annoyed expression. Before he could so much as react, Eric was struck with a stream of electricity and, with a swift flick of the dragon's head, sent flying into the pile.

Sparx flew in front of Spyro's face, arms crossed and grinning widely. "Pay up!"

"Sparx, that was only one guy after fifteen minutes," Spyro said, giving him a flat glance. "That proves nothing."

"Really? Fine, then. Let's wait here until another one comes out!" Sparx said, looking back at the tower. "It's like I told you! These things spawn these guys indefinitely!"

"Sparx, I'm not going to wait another fifteen minutes just because you don't want to lose," Spyro said, narrowing his eyes. "You already made me miss turning Cynder back to normal because you wanted to test this, and who knows what else is being thrown out of balance because of how much time we're taking!"

"So you forfeit, then?" Sparx asked, a smirk on his face. "I knew it! Face it, Spyro! When it comes to bets, you can never beat the Sparx!"

Spyro frowned before looking back towards the tower. Sitting down, he shook his head. If nothing else, at least he'd learned how easy it was to throw things off cliffs with electricity...

Classic 29.2: (Looking Towards the Future pt. 2)

Spyro and Ember flew through the skies of Dragon Shores, the former looking down at a tablet-like device in his paws. He narrowed his eyes, poking at the screen, which showed several lines rippling outwards. Spyro shook his head, letting out an annoyed sigh.

"I'm beginning to think the Professor is full of it," he said, glancing over to Ember. "I'm getting nothing on this thing."

"Isn't it supposed to cause a signal to echo back on it or… something?" Ember asked, tilting her head.

"Yeah, when a looper is in the nearby area," Spyro said, looking flatly at it. "But it's not even picking *us* up… Somehow, I get the feeling the Professor isn't as smart as he thinks he is."

"Or…maybe you and your loop brother have more in common than you thought," Ember said, a sly smirk on her face.

"Oh, har har, little miss comedy queen," Spyro said, looking over at Ember with a flat expression. "Let me remind you that, unlike Ro, I didn't get my paw caught in a vacuum cleaner when Nina wanted us to help with the chores."

Ember laughed and Spyro let out a slight chuckle in return. Looking back down at the tracker, he narrowed his eyes, giving it several more taps. He scratched his head and looked down at the buttons below the screen. Raising an eyebrow, he pressed one of them. A sharp blade shot out of the top of it, causing Spyro to jolt. After a moment, his expression went flat.

"Dang it, Professor…" he muttered, face-pawing.

"Try it now," Ember said, flying up next to him. "Maybe it acts as a transmitter."

"Ember, why in the Dragon Realms would the Professor—"

Before Spyro could finish his sentence, Ember placed a claw on the screen. The sonar echoed out and, at last, a reply signal echoed back at them. Spyro blinked before glancing over to Ember, who had a rather cheeky smirk on her face.

He sighed, shaking his head. "I will never understand the Professor's logic."

Spyro gave Ember a flat glance and the two of them picked up the pace. They followed the signal to the dense forest below and Spyro narrowed his eyes. Normally, beings in the Dragon Realms never ventured out into unexplored areas.

"Whoever this looper is," Spyro said, narrowing his eyes, "they certainly aren't the smartest of the bunch."

"Staying out of uncharted territory is one of the major rules the elders put in place," Ember said, looking down with a frown. "They say that some of the most dangerous creatures in the realms exist out here."

Spyro looked down, giving a smirk as he slowly began to descend. Ember gasped, quickly flying in front of him.

"Spyro! What are you doing!?" she asked, her eyes going wide.

"Relax, Ember," Spyro said, rolling his eyes. "That rule's only in place for those who don't have looper hacks. With how much I've been studying magic, I think I'm more than capable of handling myself down there." He gave a cocky grin.

Ember frowned, looking at him with concern. "But…"

"Come on, Embs… You're not scared, are you?" Spyro asked, a sly smirk on his face.

"What? N-no!" Ember said, glancing away as she scratched the back of her neck. "It's just that… The elders probably put that rule in place for a reason, and we have no idea who or what is down there." She

shook her head before glancing back at Spyro. "If this looper can survive in that place, they have to be pretty powerful. And if they aren't exactly the friendly type…"

"Again, relax, Embs," Spyro said, crossing his forelegs. "You've been training to defend yourself, right? We can handle whatever it is that's down there, no sweat!"

Before she could protest, Spyro was already off, darting towards the ground. Ember sighed, rolling her eyes as she reluctantly followed.

Sunlight could hardly make it through the trees as the two dragons landed down in the thick overgrowth of the forest. Spyro raised an eyebrow, looking around unconcernedly.

"This place kind of reminds me of that one place from the Equestria loops…" he muttered, then a smirk quickly made its way onto his face. "Of course, it's a tad less creepy to us because we're used to the whole horror of 'plants that *grow by themselves* !'"

Spyro chuckled, bringing up the looper tracker. Ember looked around with wide eyes, an occasional leg twitch causing her to snap her head around in alarm, the frown on her face growing by the second.

"I don't like this, Spyro," she said, looking over at him. "Let's just find this mystery looper and get the heck out of here already."

"What's the matter? Scared?" he asked, smirking. "C'mon, Embs, it's just a forest!"

"I know, but I've heard some rather unnerving stuff about the uncharted parts of the Dragon Realms…" Ember muttered, slowly walking over to Spyro, still looking around worriedly. "Supposedly, some pretty nasty creatures exist in this place, some that are far more dangerous than anything Gnasty or Ripto were ever capable of…"

Spyro's expression flattened and he glanced over to Ember with narrowed eyes. "Please. That just sounds like some spooky tale made to scare younglings so they don't wander off."

"I don't know, Spyro," Ember said, frowning at him. "There has to be some reason the elders haven't charted these parts out yet, or attempt to colonize them."

The sound of a branch snapping echoed throughout the woods, causing Ember to jump and swing her head towards the sound. Spyro merely raised an eyebrow. Her body trembling, Ember looked back over to Spyro with wide eyes. "You know, I've even heard rumors that there exists a creature in these parts that's the only known natural predator to dragonkind…"

"Ember, calm down!" Spyro said, placing a paw on her shoulder. "We'll be fine. There's no way such a thing could exist. Dragons *are* the dominate species of the *Dragon* Realms." He closed his eyes, grinning. "If such a thing even did exist, it'd probably have died out by now, considering how we're not constantly being hunted."

"And besides," he said, pointing a claw at himself, "I have my magic command line. Even if we encounter whatever it is, I have enough spells to send it running back to whatever cave it crawled out of."

Ember raised her head, looking at Spyro blankly. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes. "I suppose that's true…" She reopened her eyes, smiling now. "The tales I've heard never did mention it being strong against magic…"

"See? Now calm down," Spyro said, looking back down at the tracker. "We have a looper to find, after all."

Ember nodded and they began to head off in the direction the signal was coming from.

Night-time was quickly approaching, the soft orange glow of sunlight peering through the trees. Cynder sighed, laying her head down on the cold stone of the cave she hid in. She still had no idea where the heck she was, or what this world was about. All she knew was that she was getting tired. She had been flying ever since the start of the loop, trying to get an aerial view of wherever her Spyro might have been.

Right off the bat, she had noticed something radically different about this loop. There were only two purple dragons in her baseline, but here it seemed to be like its own element. She had passed several different kinds of purple dragons as she flew, each one not even coming close to what Spyro looked like. She took a deep breath, closing her eyes as she took a moment to gather her thoughts.

"Spyro…"

Cynder shook her head. As much as she didn't want to admit it, it looked like she was by herself this loop. She opened her eyes, looking out at the dense forest with a frown. This place seemed like it had villages and cities close to what was in her world, where dragons lived together. She had thought about spending the night there, but when she had gotten close… She wasn't quite sure why, but she found it hard to approach; her heart would beat faster when she saw dragons going about their daily business.

Sighing, she laid her head on the ground. It wasn't like a cave in the forest was one of the worst places she had spent a night in before.

"—areful. The tracker says we're getting close. Stay on your claws."

Cynder raised her head as the faint voice echoed through the woods. She blinked; it sounded vaguely familiar. Getting to her paws, she slowly made her way out of the cave and glanced around. The bushes nearby began to rustle and move, and Cynder hunkered down into attack position. When whatever was making the noise poked through the foliage, her eyes went wide.

Spyro paused, blinking as he looked at the dragoness standing in front of him. "...Hey, aren't you— *ack!* "

Before Spyro could finish, he was nearly knocked back when the dragoness threw her forelegs around his neck. His eyes went wide.

Cynder sighed. "Thank the ancestors we found each other. This loop hasn't started off well for me…"

Spyro gulped as Cynder hugged him tighter. As she started to nuzzle his neck, his head shot up and he closed his eyes. "Wrong Spyro! *Wrong Spyro!* "

Cynder's eyes blinked open and she pulled away as she got a good look at him. Her expression went blank for several seconds before her eyes went wide. Glancing away with a bright blush pushing through her scales, she took a few steps back. "O-oh! Uh… S-sorry…"

An awkward silence fell over them as they glanced away from each other. Before things could get anymore awkward, the bushes began to rustle again and a pink head popped out.

"... Cynder!" Ember exclaimed, her expression brightening. She quickly pushed through the foliage and ran over to her side.

The smile returned to Cynder's face as Ember threw her forelegs around her. Cynder placed one of her wings around Ember before looking back at Spyro. "What are you two doing here? Is my Spyro in this loop as well?"

"We should be asking you a similar question, considering this is our baseline and all," Spyro said, shaking off any remaining awkward feelings as he looked at Cynder. "And, no. As far as we know, you're the only outside looper here…" Several seconds passed before Spyro narrowed his eyes. "Which means…"

Ember's eyes went wide, the realization hitting her like a flying bag of hammers. Seeing the expression on Spyro's face growing colder by the second, and Cynder's own expression starting to break as her eyes grew wider and her frown deepened, Ember quickly stepped in between them.

"N-now, hold on a second!" she said, looking at Spyro with a frown. "Just because she's the only other looper we've found so far doesn't mean anything! Besides, I don't think this is the best place to discuss this sort of thing! Let's at least wait until we get back to the Professor's lab before we start with the interrogations!"

Ember looked at him with pleading eyes, and Spyro looked on with an indifferent expression. "...Fine. But she better have a good explanation when we get back."

With that, he spread his wings and flew up through the canopy. Ember frowned before looking back over at Cynder, who seemed almost frozen in place. With a concerned frown, Ember walked over to her, placing a paw on her shoulder. "Cynder? Are you alright?"

"H-huh?" Cynder said, springing back to life as she looked at Ember. "O-oh, yeah…"

Ember frowned as Cynder glanced away, a frown on her face and her eyelids drooping. Ember glanced down to look her in the eyes.

"Hey, it's okay. My Spyro's just dealing with a rather touchy subject for him at the moment. I'm sure things will work out fine in the end," she said, smiling. "Now, come on. I'll take you to the Professor's lab. I think you'll like our world. We have a lot of fun stuff here."

Cynder glanced up, watching as Ember spread her wings and flew up into the air. She hovered above the ground, looking down with a smile. Cynder's expression went blank, though she eventually spread her wings too, following her into the air.

As silence fell again in the forest, a rustling sound trembled through the undergrowth and a long, stick-like leg pushed itself out of the bushes…

Legend 29.3 (Reconnection pt. 2)

Spyro rolled his eyes as Volteer rambled off his usual dialogue after his rescue from Dante's Freeze and the trip back to the temple. Though it sounded a bit crazy, Spyro could have sworn the electric guardian's speech got faster with every other loop. He shook his head to rid that thought. It was doubtful Volteer was looping, considering he had yet to break baseline script.

"Yes, yes, Volteer, it is good to have you back as well," Ignitus finally interrupted, shaking his head. "But we do have bigger matters to attend to here. We're still short two guardians and, on top of that, there's also the other dragon Spyro brought back with him."

Spyro kept a solid expression. Usually the guardians were pretty good at accepting Cynder into the temple, as, even in baseline, they felt that what happened to her was more so their fault, since they had not been able to protect the hatchery properly. Still, he stood on guard, just in case any possible variants were to pop up.

Volteer shook his head, look back at Ignitus with a grin. "Yes, yes, it is very fortunate that Spyro knew enough about the absolute enigma that is Convexity to free the trapped spirit. It is a relief after our… most unfortunate incompetence on that day..." Volteer trailed off, closing his eyes as he did something most would never expect: take a moment's silence.

"Indeed. While this is a joyous occasion, we must also be concerned about the Dark Army's next course of action," Ignitus said, glancing towards the pool of visions. "With their main general gone, they are most likely in a state of confusion. It would be best if we use this time to rescue the next guardian."

"Um… Ignitus?"

Ignitus looked down, seeing the frown on Spyro's face as he looked up with sad eyes. He gave a gentle smile. "Yes, Spyro?"

"I know we're in desperate times, and that the other guardians need rescuing…" Spyro glanced down, finding it hard to believe what he was about to say, "but is it alright if I take a short reprieve?"

Spyro winced under Ignitus's look, though the elder's expression was not one of disappointment. He raised an eyebrow, looking down with concern. "Why? Is something the matter, Spyro?"

"W-well…" Spyro had a hard time looking Ignitus in the eyes. Even when he attempted to raise his head, his eyes still stayed firmly fixated on the ground. "It's just that… I understand that I possess powers like no other dragon, but I am also still just a child, too..."

"Yeah, and don't mind me adding on, but we almost became popsicles trying to rescue voltage-tongue over there," Sparx butted in, looking over towards Volteer with a smirk. "The least you could do is give us some breathing time before you send us back into a warzone."

Spyro shook his head. He would have greatly preferred if Sparx hadn't tried to help out, especially when he wasn't looping. Ignitus took a deep breath, letting out a soft sigh. Nobody paid attention to Volteer's, "Well, I never!"

Ignitus looked down at Spyro with a frown, his gaze soft.

"Believe me, Spyro, if we had a choice, we'd never send a child out into a warzone, regardless of if they were purple or not," he said, closing his eyes. "However, we do not have much of a choice here. I need to stay here to guard the temple, and Volteer, as well as any of the other guardians you meet, will need time to recover their strength after the events that transpired."

"Indeed," Volteer said, shaking his head. "As much as I would like to assist you in recovering our fellow brethren, I am afraid that crystalline energy-absorption device they had me hooked up to has drained a vast majority of my power. As such, I regret to inform you that the most I can do is teach you of the electrifying intrigue the element I, and now you, possess." He paused, looking over to Ignitus. "That said, I suppose it wouldn't be too much of a request to postpone the training to give them adequate time to rest. I do have some mild concerns about what sending a dragon so young into the middle of chaotic warzone might do to Spyro's psyche."

Ignitus looked over at Volteer emotionlessly before looking back down at Spyro. "I suppose some rest is in order," he said, giving a smile. "It can't be for too long, however, as Cyril is likely waiting on us. Maybe an hour at most."

"Thank you, Ignitus," Spyro said, giving a respectful bow before heading out the door.

"Do not wander too far from the temple, though!" Ignitus called out, his voice echoing through the halls. "Who knows what's lurking, waiting to strike!"

"Don't worry, Iggy!" Sparx said, hovering by the door as he gave a thumbs-up. "You don't have to worry about that. I'll make sure Spyro doesn't do anything stupid."

Ignitus shook his head as Sparx flew off, looking towards the door with a frown. *'Why does this not reassure me…?'*

Classic 29.4: (Sick Loop pt. 3)

Sparx flew through the air, heading past groups of dragons in the village, his eyes shifting back and forth as he looked around for one dragon in particular. He had checked to see if Hunter was awake, but from the blank stare he'd received when he'd had asked, he could

only assume that was a 'no.' That meant he was left with one other choice, one which he was unsure of.

Sparx glanced towards one of the streets at the sound of a sweet, if a bit high-pitched, voice letting out an 'eek!' He watched as Ember was scooted away from a building by an elder dragon.

She turned back in protest. "Please! I can really help with—"

"Ember, it's sweet that you want to help and all…" the elder dragoness said, a concerned look on her face. "But you're a bit young to be helping with psychological problems. Come back in a few years when you're older and possibly have a degree in the subject."

"But—!" Before Ember could protest, the door was closed in her face. She paused before letting out a solemn sigh, her posture drooping as she closed her eyes.

"Yo! Ember!"

Ember turned her head, blinking as she saw the golden dragonfly heading towards her.

"Sparx?" she asked, tilting her head. "What are you doing here?"

"Spyro sent me," Sparx said, smirking. "He's sick and refuses to take his medication."

Ember blinked, looking at Sparx blankly. He shook his head, rolling his eyes before looking at her again.

"Spyro's sick and doesn't want the Artisan elders trying to help him because of events that happened when he was a kid," Sparx elaborated. "I'd take care of the big purple baby myself, but…ya know, small dragonfly."

Ember raised an eyebrow, sitting down and looking at Sparx curiously. "How does a looper get sick?"

"Trust me. When you hear the events that led up to it, you'd be surprised that a cold is all he got," Sparx said, chuckling to himself. Taking a deep breath to stifle his giggles, he looked at Ember with a smile. "So, mind helping out?"

Ember paused, glancing away as she scratched the back of her neck. "Oh, uh… Gee… I don't know. I was…uh…kind of busy this loop and all…" She looked back at Sparx, giving a sheepish smile. "Couldn't Hunter take care of him?"

"Already checked. Hunter isn't awake and, honestly, I'd think he'd end up doing more harm than good," Sparx said, rolling his eyes as he forced himself to subdue a chuckle.

"Well, maybe we have an outside looper this loop? Or someone new woke up?" Ember said, glancing away awkwardly. "I know Spyro made a lot of friends during his adventure to take down the Sorceress and all…"

Sparx narrowed his eyes, quickly flying in front of Ember's face to make eye contact. "What's up with you?" he asked, placing a hand to his chin. "I mean, I know you don't go ultra uber fangirl mode for Spyro anymore, but I would have thought you of all dragons would want to help him…"

"Well, it's just that…" Ember paused, having a hard time looking Sparx in the eyes, her mouth curling into a small frown. She gave a soft sigh and closed her eyes before taking a deep breath. "...Alright. I'll help, but is it alright if I do something first?"

Sparx blinked, raising an eyebrow at her as she gave a meek smile.

Spyro groaned. His throat felt like it was on fire. Coughing, he looked irritably at the branches of the bush poking into his side. He'd not even wanted to risk the elders stumbling upon him by accident, so he'd chosen to hide directly in the hedges of the maze—or what accounted to a maze by Artisan logic.

Spyro took soft breaths, as each one felt like someone was taking a cheese-grater to his throat. He groaned, sprawling out as best as he could without causing anymore discomfort than he was already in. He snorted, trying in vain to push out whatever was blocking his nostrils. Groaning again, he scowled and his eyelids drooped.

"This sucks," he said flatly, giving a pathetic sigh.

"Hey, Spyro! You in here?"

Spyro raised his head as Sparx's voice reverberated throughout the maze. Carefully poking his head out, he saw the dragonfly looking around, trying and failing to subdue a wide grin. Spyro groaned, weakly pulling himself out of the bush and plopping back down on the ground. A weak groan was the only thing that alerted his buddy to his presence. Sparx looked over, smirking.

"You still hanging on?" he asked.

"Just barely…" Spyro moaned, closing his eyes. "If it weren't for the fact that I have zero energy right now, I would have just ended this loop by now. I hate being sick…"

"Come on, Spyro. Talking like that when you accidently caused every villain you've made in baseline to attack you at once is one thing, but this..." Sparx rolled his eyes. "I'm beginning to worry about you, to be honest."

"Fine, fine…" Spyro moaned, his voice barely reaching above a whisper. "We'll talk about it later. For now, did you manage to find anyone?"

"So far, only Ember. Hunter isn't awake."

Spyro let out a low moan, his eyes drooping. "Okay… Where is she?"

"We'll, she's here, but…" Sparx paused, shaking his head as he looked down with a smirk. "Well, it's best if you just see for yourself." He turned around, a grin on his face. "Come on, you big pink chicken! It's not like he has the plague, for Pete's sake!"

Spyro glanced up, his eyes full of confusion as Sparx's grin got wider. The bushes rustled and a timid voice made itself known. "O-okay…"

Spyro blinked as Ember made her way out of the bushes. Or, at least, it kind of looked like her under the getup she was wearing. A doctor's mask was firmly over her mouth, and a pair of goggles were placed over her eyes. As she wriggled out of the bushes, she unhooked the large blue robe she was wearing from a branch, her green rubber-gloves squeaking as she walked. Spyro looked on blankly and Ember met his gaze.

"S-so…" she said, the mask shifting slightly over her mouth. "How… how bad is it?"

"Well… I definitely don't need surgery, if that's what you're implying," Spyro said flatly, frowning at her. "Don't you think the getup is a bit overkill?"

"Sorry, Spyro, but it was the only way I could convince her to come," Sparx said, looking over flatly.

Ember shuffled around nervously as she looked back towards the open fields not far off. She glanced back at Spyro, her eyes glazed with slight apprehension. "Uh, Spyro? I don't mean to sound rude, but…are you sure you don't want the elders taking care of you this loop?"

"Yeah, I'm sure," Spyro said flatly, scowling. "The last thing I need is them giving me something that tastes like a shoe, or bathing me in vin-vin- *viiiiiiin*— "

Spyro sneezed, which was quickly followed by a shrill *'eek!* ' as Ember darted back, pulling out a can of disinfectant from her subspace and spraying it for a good several seconds. Spyro blinked before turning to Sparx. He shrugged and they both looked at Ember. She slid the can back into her subspace and gave a meek grin under her mask.

"Hey… Listen, Ember…" Spyro said, looking up with a concerned glance. "You don't have to actually be around me when I'm sick. I just need to…rest this off." He inhaled deeply and let his head go limp on the ground. "I just need you to keep the elders busy while I'm getting better."

"B-but…" Ember looked down, her eyes wide as she willed herself to move closer, if only by an inch. "Where are you going to do that?"

"I dunno…" Spyro raised his head, a blank look in his eyes. "Here, I guess."

"That's a terrible idea, though!" Ember said, shaking her head. "You should be in bed resting! Laying outside while sick will likely only make it worse!"

"Well, what do you suggest?" Spyro asked, resting his head on his paws as he gazed up at her flatly. "I doubt your parents would be cool with the idea of taking a sick dragon in, regardless of how famous he may be." Spyro shot Sparx a sharp glare when he noticed the dragonfly rolling his eyes. "And I'll take a swim in that blue goop the Magic Crafters call water before I risk the elders finding out about this."

Ember frowned under her mask, glancing between the two as she took a step back. Sparx placed a hand to his chin before giving a smirk.

"I have an idea!" he said, his smirk turning into a grin. "It was something I wanted to try, but haven't really had the chance until now."

Spyro and Ember glanced at each other before looking back at Sparx.

Sparx shook his head, the grin reappearing on his face not a second later. "Trust me. You're gonna love this!"

Legend 29.5:

Spyro and Sparx walked through the caves of Dante's Freezer. It was a rather rare occurrence in that neither one was awake and, so far, things had pretty much gone like they had the first time around. Spyro chuckled, lifting his head with a grin.

"Alright, my turn," he said, raising a wing as he looked forward. "*Hellooooooooooooo!* "

As his voice echoed through the tunnel, the sound of chuckling apes soon answered. Spyro and Sparx walked towards the edge, seeing the mob waiting for them below.

Spyro glanced over to Sparx with a cheeky expression. "Who's the genius now, echo man?"

Then his expression took a turn for the serious as he looked down at the apes. Spreading his wings, he was about to jump down, but a loud blast echoed throughout the caverns, causing everyone in the area to cover their ears. The sound of apes screeching as they went flying into the air soon followed before Spyro finally got a good look at what was going on.

In the small arena where the apes were, stood an odd metallic man with large speakers for shoulders, somehow managing to retain balance on two legs. The robot man looked around before running down the pathway. Spyro and Sparx looked on blankly before looking at each other.

Then, in a flash of blue light, another metallic man appeared in the area, wearing blue battle-armor with some form of a cannon attached to his arm. The robot glanced around, taking note of Spyro and Sparx.

"Oh, hey!" he said, raising a hand to them. "I don't suppose you saw another metallic being like me run through here, huh?"

Spyro and Sparx blinked before Spyro slowly raised a wing towards the tunnel where the other man had gone. The blue robot smirked.

"Thanks!" he said before running down the path.

Mega Man frowned, his eyes narrowing as he began charging his buster. This loop was turning out to be majorly weird. Even if Light had isolated himself from the rest of the world, he wasn't sure how he was still able to make technology well above the era they were in, let alone how Wily was able to do the same. Though, given the amount of insane stuff even an unawake Wily had pulled off in the past, it wasn't that surprising.

Nonetheless, there was no sense thinking about it now. Wily was helping to revive this 'Dark Master' with his robots, and it was up to him to keep that from happening. While taking on an army seemed daunting, for now it was best to start it like he did every loop: take out the eight robot masters he'd made this time, starting with Echo Man.

Classic 29.6: (What Makes a Hero? pt. 2)

"You're going to be fighting robots this loop?" Ember asked, lying down on the floor of the Professor's laboratory.

"Apparently," Spyro said, lying down as well and looking towards one of the computer monitors. "I mean, I've faced robots before, but these guys are shaping up to be a thing. No matter how hard I tried, I could only damage them with magic attacks. Not sure what they're

made out of, but it's definitely not something from our baseline if even chi attacks couldn't dent them."

"This is so intriguing!" the Professor said, shaking in eager anticipation like a child on Christmas morning. "They sound like something that could provide great benefits to our own world if we can figure out what they're made of and what makes them tick!" The Professor slid his glasses back on his face, looking towards Spyro with a grin. "Spyro! Please promise me you'll bring me back a specimen, even if it's mangled beyond repair! I can't wait to start analyzing these things!"

Spyro chuckled, rolling his eyes. "Will do, Professor. Just promise not to cause a loop crash with it."

"Come now. How could I possibly crash the loop by studying armor?" the Professor asked, scratching his head.

"Trust us. We know you when it comes to experimenting in the loops," Sparx said, a cheeky smirk on his face. "Somehow, you'll find a way."

The room burst into a chorus of laughter as the Professor scowled, placing his hands on his hips. He groaned, turning around and muttering something about 'kids these days' as he headed towards his computer monitor. As the laughter began to die down, Ember turned to Spyro.

"These robots, though… They sound really dangerous to non-magic-users if that's the only thing that damages them," Ember said, looking concerned. "Maybe we should warn the elders?"

"Eh, I doubt they'll listen until they see it with their own eyes," Spyro said, nonchalantly waving his paw. "Keep in mind, I haven't stopped a big bad trying to take over the world yet, so right now, to them, I'm still just a normal dragon." Spyro smirked, clenching one paw into a fist and slamming it into the palm of his other one. "Don't worry,

though, once I smash a few robots, I'll be back to my usual status soon enough."

"Geez, don't get a fat head or anything," Sparx said with a snarky grin.

As Spyro shot Sparx a sharp glare, Ember frowned, still looking concerned.

"I don't know… Maybe you should try teaching others magic as well?" she said, tilting her head. "Even if it's only other loopers, it'll make me feel safer."

"I don't know… Only you and the Professor are awake this loop, and I doubt the Professor has a magical bone in his body," Spyro said, a snide smirk on his face when he saw the Professor looking back at him with a flat glance. Looking back at Ember, he raised an eyebrow. "Besides, I thought you were already good with magic."

"Well, only barrier magic," Ember said, looking down timidly. "Everything else I only have a basic understanding of." Looking back to Spyro, she gave a sheepish smile. "What with trying to get my village to take me seriously when I try to help non-loopers, I don't get much practice when it comes to self-defence arts outside of variants, and even then it's mostly physical and fire arts."

Ember took a deep breath, steadying her nerves. "If what you say is true, though, I get the feeling that I'm going to regret slacking off on my studies…"

Spyro looked at Ember blankly for a few seconds before a smirk appeared on his face. "If you want, I can teach you how to use some offensive magic."

"Really?" Ember asked, looking up with wide eyes. "Is that okay? You're already helping me with Dragon Kata until I know enough to impress Sensei Ragnar. I don't want to be a burden…"

"No problem, Embs!" Spyro said, a wide grin on his face. "If you want, I can continue to teach you both. You have to admit, I'm a lot more fun than a bunch of stuffy elders."

Both dragons shared a laugh at this, and Sparx smirked at them. Spyro stood up, a smirk on his face as he looked towards Ember.

"Come on. If you learn enough, you may be able to join in on this," he said, offering a paw. "Nothing says I have to hog all the glory myself."

"Why, thanks," Ember said, grinning as she stood up. "Just be careful not to not teach me too much. Don't want to be upstaged by a bright pink dragoness now." She gave a wink, sticking her tongue out at him.

Spyro snorted and Ember giggled as she walked past him. He shook his head before quickly following behind with a smirk. Sparx rolled his eyes, an amused expression on his face.

The air was cool in Autumn Plains as the two dragons sat outside the castle. Spyro smirked as a lightning bolt flew through the air and struck one of the targets he had set up. Having spent a good portion of the day giving Ember a general idea of how basic attack spells went, Spyro was rather surprised by how quickly she had caught on. Even though she had denied the magic command line, she was still able to get the basics of firing a lightning bolt down.

Ember gave a confident smile, tracing the runes with her tail as the air became electrically charged. In a swift motion, a bolt of lightning shot out, slamming into the wooden target and smashing it to pieces. Taking a deep breath, she stood up, a grin on her face. Spyro walked over to her, smirking.

"Not bad," he said, giving her a pat on the back.

"Thanks," Ember said, looking over with a smile.

"You catch on quick. You sure you don't want to learn the command line?" Spyro asked, raising an eyebrow. "If I've said it once, I've said it a hundred times… Magical Calligraphy is just crap."

Ember smirked, looking over at Spyro with narrowed eyes. "I don't know. You sure the Artisans forced you to take art classes?"

"Oh, har har," Spyro said, his expression going flat as he looked her in the eyes. "Seriously, though. Disregarding the fact I ditched most of those, Magical Calligraphy is just not practical in battle."

"Really?" Ember asked, tilting her head. "How so?"

"Well, for starters, have you tried using any other spells besides reflect when you have enemies all around you?" Spyro asked, crossing his forelegs as he sat up on his hind legs.

"Not really. Again, that was the only spell I really knew," Ember said, a confused expression on her face as she sat down.

Spyro huffed, sitting back down with a frown. "Well, let me tell you, disregarding the fact that I need to take art classes, trying to draw shapes when you're constantly moving isn't easy, and even then..." Spyro rose his forelegs into the air. "The whole thing can be nullified by grabbing the caster's tail!" Spyro placed his paws back on the ground, an annoyed expression on his face. "At least with the command line, I can still cast while I'm blindfolded, even if I can't see where I'm firing."

Ember raised an eyebrow, her lips curling into a frown. "I kind of get what you're saying, but…I don't know." She shook her head. "I don't think I'd be able to get it like you do. It just sounds way too complicated."

Spyro smirked, reaching out and placing a paw on Ember's shoulder. "Don't worry, Embs. That's what I thought at first, but once I really started to get into it, it was surprisingly easy."

"I don't know…" Ember paused, glancing down as a glint of apprehension appeared in her eyes. "I'll…I'll have to think about it. Until then, it's probably best I just learn something basic to defend myself with this loop."

"Fair enough," Spyro said, giving a cheeky smirk. "Just remember, if you know a command line, you can actually create your own spells, like this!"

He grinned, turning around and standing up on his hind legs as a blast of magic flew into the air. It ascended higher and higher and, when it was above all possible landmarks, it exploded in a radiant purple blast, forming a translucid image of Spyro's head. It lasted for a barely a few seconds before slowly fading away. Ember chuckled at the sight, rolling her eyes as she looked at Spyro.

"Interesting. Other than an ego boost, I'm not sure what purpose it serves, though," she said, smirking.

"I don't think of it as an ego boost," Spyro said, a grin on his face. "Just a little reminder that I am, indeed, awesome."

Both dragons shared a laugh that lasted for a few seconds before Spyro broke it off with a deep breath. Giving a grin, he stretched and got up.

"Well, I don't know about you, but I'm getting a bit bored," he said, turning around. Looking back at Ember, he grinned. "How about we take a break? I have this crazy idea to troll Ripto that involves some rather extensive magic use, as well as two tons of cotton candy." Spyro smirked. "Even if you still want to study, you might learn something from it."

Ember snorted, a grin on her face. "Like what? How to give villains a sugar rush?"

"Oh, you'll see…" Spyro said, a devious grin on his face. "Let's just say Ripto's going to find it a lot harder to be taken seriously when all

his spells somehow end up involving sugary snacks."

Ember snorted out in a laugh, quickly covering her mouth with her paws. Taking a few seconds to compose herself, she looked at Spyro with a grin. "Be careful now. We don't want the younglings flocking to—"

Before Ember could finish her statement, a low whooshing sound swept through the plains. Both dragons raised their heads, looking around curiously.

"What the…?" Ember muttered, turning to Spyro with wide eyes. "Is that a normal sound here?"

Spyro shook his head, looking up with narrowed eyes. "No. Not unless Hunter's trying out some new plane he found."

He quickly ran out towards the main field near the pond, Ember in tow, looking around for the source of the noise. Spyro glanced up, his eyes going wide at the sight of a massive green beam of energy slicing overhead. It struck the castle with a resounding explosion and both dragons quickly covered their faces with their wings to block the ensuing dust-cloud. As the dust began to clear, Spyro removed his wings from over his face and his eyes went wide.

Odd metallic ships, bearing the same color-scheme as the robot he had fought earlier in the loop, flew overhead, multiple robots attached to the undersides. One by one, they began to disembark, falling down to the ground below.

Despite the overwhelming odds, Spyro gave a cocky grin. "Well, Ember, time to put what you just learned to work!"

Legend 29.7

"This better be good, Sparx. You know I don't like making unawake Cynder spend any unnecessary time under Malefor's control."

"Relax, bro! This is going to be good!"

Spyro gave Sparx, and the ridiculous getup he wore, a flat glance. A blue t-shirt adorned his body, the hat on his head sported a rainbow of colors, and he wore a fake thick mustache on his face that rivaled the likes of Mario. Spyro shook his head, looking up at the ominous black tower that had become Cynder's lair while under the Dark Master's control.

Spyro sighed, placing a paw over his forehead. "I have no idea how I let you talk me into this…"

"Calm down, bro! It's like I told ya, this is going to be sweet!" Sparx said, grinning under his bushy fake mustache. Reaching into his subspace pocket, he pulled out a large pizza box, somehow managing to support it above himself despite the weight and balance differences.

He darted off not a second later, and Spyro glanced over the crystal he was hiding behind with a flat expression, watching as Sparx flew over and rang the doorbell. Why an ominous fortress of evil had a doorbell, he would never know. Either way, Spyro was ready to act in an instant should this harebrained prank of Sparx's went horribly, horrible wrong.

As the fortress door slowly swung open, a muscular ape came out, a snarl escaping his lips as he eyed the dragonfly.

"Hello-a!" Sparx said, twirling his fake mustache as he somehow held the box over his head one-handed. "I have a pizza delivery to-a one miss Terror of the Skies! Is she-a in?"

The ape snarled, attempting to take a swipe at Sparx, but the dragonfly quickly darted up into the air.

"Now, now! No need-a to be rude!" Sparx said, wagging his finger at the ape. "I'll have-a you know, I came all the way-a from the Well of

Souls to deliver this-a! The Mountain of Malefor-a; it's-a fires make-a the best for cooking pizza!"

The ape blinked, eying Sparx curiously as the dragonfly gave a wide smile under his moustache. Scratching his head, the ape slowly walked back into the fortress. Several moments passed before a screech pierced the air. A slender figure landed down next to Sparx, a sharp piercing gaze looking over him.

Cynder, Terror of the Skies, wasted no time on readying to strike, claws at the ready as she hunkered down. "You have five seconds to explain who you are and why you're here. Not like it would matter either way."

"Now, now missy! Is that any-a way to greet a delivery boy?" Sparx said, unflinching as he flew up right into Cynder's face to look her in the eyes. "I'll have-a you know I had to cross-a the frigid wasteland of Dante's Freezer to get this-a to you! Do you have-a any idea how hard it is to keep-a the pizza warm in a frigid-a wasteland!?"

Cynder snarled, baring her fangs as she narrowed her eyes. "*Speak!* "

"Alright-a, alright-a, no need to preserve-a your evil reputation in front of your own-a fortress!" Sparx said, flying backwards before opening the pizza box. "I have-a the pizza you order, miss Skies!"

Cynder blinked, eying the odd confection in the box blankly before narrowing her eyes again. "I did not order such an abomination of what one would consider food."

"Oh, your words-a, they cut-a deep!" Sparx said, dramatically raising his hand over his eyes as he held the box out.

"That's not the only thing about to cut deep…" Cynder muttered, readying her tailblade behind her.

"I'll have-a you know, I escaped from my own-a kind and had-a to deal with the harsh words-a they gave, all so I could use-a my family's old recipe to support-a the glorious Dark Army!" Sparx said, quickly flying into the air and dodging a tailblade-strike with ease. "Why, when Malefor said he'd-a let me open up-a my own restaurant in-a his stronghold, I was-a thrilled! How would-a you think he'd-a respond to his right-hand dragon calling it an abomination!?"

Cynder paused, eying Sparx curiously as she blinked. "...Why in the realms would my master allow a restaurant to be opened in his fortress?"

"Ah, morale, she is a thing that-a comes and goes with-a the tide!" Sparx said, looking back with a smile. "My pizzas, what you so crudely insulted, they help keep-a up the morale! When the Dark Master saw how they helped keep-a the morale up, he hired me-a in a heartbeat!" Sparx frowned, quickly placing a hand on his hip. "And may I remind-a you, you also ordered one of my pizzas!"

Cynder narrowed her eyes, standing on all fours as she glared down coldly at the dragonfly. "I did no such thing. Regardless of my master's minions' lack of taste, I would never be caught dead eating such garbage!"

"But-a I gotta the letter from you-a this morning!" Sparx said, pulling out a piece of paper from seemingly nowhere. "'Dear Mister Glowy, I have-a heard-a many good things about-a your pizzas. I wish-a to try one myself. Despite being the head of-a Malefor's army, I am nothing but scales and-a bones! I need-a more meat if I wish to properly inspire the troops! From Cynder, Terror of-a the Skies!"

Cynder began tapping a claw on the ground, scowling as she heard the chuckles from the apes that had gathered behind her in the entrance of the fortress. Letting out a low growl, she glared at Sparx coldly.

"Let me see that," Cynder demanded, taking the paper from Sparx with a swift flick of her paw. She narrowed her eyes him, a puff of

black smoke escaping her nostrils. "I will also have you know that I am *not* merescales and bones. I have taken down dragons twice my size, so watch your tongue!"

"But Miss-a Cynder, I am only repeating what-a you said on-a the note!" Sparx said, then placed a finger on his chin. "Although, while I would-a usually point out-a how others should watch-a the weight..."—Sparx internally smirked, able to just sense Spyro scowling from behind the crystal—"...you look-a rather measured! I know-a finding a mate is a major thing-a in life, but it should not-a be at the expense of-a one's health!"

Cynder's left eye twitched and she quickly shot a sharp glare towards the apes chuckling behind the frame of the entrance. Letting out an exasperated sigh, she looked over the note. After a few seconds' pause, she looked at Sparx with a scowl.

"This is not my writing," she said flatly, giving Sparx a glare. "This chicken-scratch looks like it could have only been written by the likes of an idiot."

At this, Sparx internally scowled, swearing he could hear Spyro chuckling behind him. Quickly brushing it off, he looked at Cynder with wide eyes.

"But-a Miss Cynder, I can't-a just take-a this back!" he said, placing a hand on his head with a look of fake shock. "All of-a my pizzas must-a be used to support-a the cause!"

"Throw it to the Dreadwings," Cynder said sharply, turning around and heading back into her fortress. "Malefor knows they're the only things that slope is fit for."

"But-a, Miss Cynder! All-a my pizzas can only be eaten by-a the troops!" Sparx said, quickly flying after her. "And there's-a the small matter of the fee!"

"I DIDN'T ORDER THIS SLOP!" Cynder snapped, glaring at Sparx with fangs bared. "Why in the realms should I have to *pay* for it!?"

"All profits go-a directly to supporting the Dark Army!" Sparx said, a grin on his face. "Surely its-a general would-a want to support it most-a of all!"

"That makes no sense, though!" Cynder said, growling as a visible anger vein pulsed on her forehead. "If I wanted to support it, I would use my funds DIRECTLY for it! Why the *hell* would I buy this slop!? Scratch that, why the hell would *anyone* in this army buy it to support it, instead of directly doing so themselves!?"

"I'm-a sorry, Miss-a Cynder!" Sparx said, raising a hand in front of himself. "I do not make-a the rules! I just-a follow them!"

Cynder's left eye began twitching again as she growled, and all the while the laughter of apes bellowed out from the entrance hall. Her blood boiled, smoke billowed out of her nostrils, and her claws dug into the ground. Then, as suddenly as the breakdown began to start, it stopped, her face becoming surprisingly tranquil.

"You know what? You're right. Silly me," Cynder said, her voice dissonantly calm. "I should support the cause. Tell me, how much does this meal cost?"

Sparx blinked, noting the uneasy silence as the apes curiously poked their heads out from behind the entrance frame. Nevertheless, he effortlessly kept up his charade.

"Only-a fifty gems. Barely a pocket's worth in-a comparison to-a some other stuff," Sparx said, a grin on his face.

"Very well," Cynder said, quickly heading back into the fortress. Several moments passed before she came back out with the appropriate gems in paw. "Here you go."

"Thank you-a, Miss Cynder! The Dark Army thanks you for-a the support!" Sparx said, quickly exchanging the box for the gems.

"Tell them they are welcome," Cynder said, a surprisingly calm smile on her face as she turned back to her fortress.

An eerie silence fell as everyone watched the surprisingly calm Terror of the Skies walk back towards her fortress with an out-of-place smile on her face. Spyro, Sparx, and even the apes gave her blank looks as she stopped just before the door, pizza box held delicately in her paw.

"Tell me…which one of my minions thought this would be funny?" Cynder said, a small smile on her face, her voice carrying a frighteningly sweet tone. "Because one of you has food that needs to be eaten…"

Her eyes went sharp, her wings flared and her teeth bared, and her voice rose to an ungodly roar, fire spitting from her throat.

" *IN ONE BITE!"*

All the apes at the entrance took off as Cynder letting out an unholy screech and flew after them, her claws tearing through the box as she raised it up over her head. Tendrils of darkness exploded out in front of her as even the fiery pits of hell couldn't match the sheer fury she displayed in that moment.

Sparx blinked as he heard the terror-filled shrieks of apes screeching far and wide. Spyro skulked out of his hiding place, giving him a flat glance.

"...Maybe we should wait until she cools off before trying to return her to normal?' Sparx said, scratching his cheek.

Spyro let out a solemn sigh, placing a paw over his face.

Fused 29.8: (Both Spyros and Red VS Blue) (Feat: GammaTron)

When Classic first awoke, he realized it'd be a strange loop. For one, he was wearing red armor with purple markings. Secondly, he was standing next to someone who wore armour with reversed colours to his own. And thirdly? He was human.

"Spy?" the other person asked.

"Ro?" Classic raised a brow under his helmet.

"Why are we here?" Legend asked.

"I have no clue," Classic replied.

"Hola (Hello)." Both jumped before turning around to see another human in similar bronze armor. "Mi nombre es López. ¿Estás dos despiertos para este circuito?"

"...What did he say?" Legend asked.

"All I got out of that was 'Lopez,' " Classic replied.

The bronze soldier sighed before tapping his neck three times. "I said: My name is Lopez. Are you two awake for this loop?"

"Oh. Why didn't you say that before?"

"I prefer Spanish," Lopez replied. "Now, let me hurry before the others learn that I can talk English. I love to mess with their heads. Humans, such amusement."

"You're not a human?"

"No. I am a robot," Lopez replied. "...Why is that one looking at me like a fangirl does her favorite teen idol?"

"He's a robot fan," Classic replied, earning a whack to the back of his head. "Gah! The back of my head!"

"Sh-shut up!" Legend blushed under his helmet.

"Is this your first Fused Loop?" Lopez asked.

"No," both of them replied.

"That is good. I didn't want to explain anything." Lopez snorted. "But welcome to Blood Gulch, the first home of us: the Reds and Blues of Project Freelancer."

"Blood Gulch?" Classic asked.

"Reds and Blues?" Legend repeated.

"Yes. Do either of you know a Michael J. Caboose?"

"That guy shot me in the back with a bazooka and said Hunter did it!" Classic informed.

"He looped in as Malefor once while Sparx was replaced with his best friend Church." Legend shuddered. "I...don't like to talk about that Loop."

"Understandable." Lopez nodded. "Caboose is a special case among anchors. His mental levels are so dangerous that the Admins have all agreed upon calling his issue 'Caboose Syndrome.' "

"Caboose Syndrome?"

"It is when someone has Sakura Syndrome and Setsuna Syndrome fused into one, mixed with any other type of mental illness that may or may not be normal to their loops," Lopez informed. "Caboose is only able to be 'cured' by having someone he knows in the same loop as him. If at least one person from our loop here isn't with him, well..." He sighed. "There's a reason why he's given read-only loop punishments after the first time involved him killing five other loopers in a punishment loop, one of them being Twilight Sparkle and another being Ranma Saotome. I heard that Ranma's skull got ripped out of his head and was used to beat him to death."

"That doesn't make any sense!" Legend argued.

"That's what I heard Ranma screaming before Caboose killed him with his own skull." Lopez shrugged.

"Lopez! Are ya up here?"

"Si," Lopez replied before a human in full red armor got outside.

"There ya are, Lopez. Ah..." the man began, before noticing the other two. "You two ain't Grif and Simmons. Names, soldiers!"

"Spyro the Dragon, but I go by 'Classic' or just 'Spy,' " Classic informed.

"Likewise, but I go by 'Legend' or 'Ro,' " Legend said.

"Well, Classic, Legend, welcome t' Red Team!" the man informed. "Mah name is Sergeant General...but y'all can just call me 'Sarge.' "

"Sarge? Aren't you the guy who crashed a loop just because you were in Sonic's body that loop?" Classic asked.

"He was a Blue! A dirty, dirty Blue!" Sarge argued. "Ah couldn't go on with mahself, knowing that Ah was a Blue. So Ah rigged a doomsday device and set it off. Loop crashed and Ah got Eiken and Caboose and his boo Lin Grace from that loop laid."

"...Someone *likes* that loop?" Classic and Legend asked after a few moments of awkward silence.

"Now why does everyone hate that there loop?" Sarge demanded. "Sure it can be borin', but ya just have t' know how t' spice it up!"

"Bull," Classic coughed.

"That's it! Y'all are now mah Grif this loop!" Sarge declared before shooting Classic.

"Gah! The side of my waist!"

"What the heck?!" Legend exclaimed.

"Legend, y'all remember this now: all of Red Team's plans rely heavily on Classic there being harmed in any way, shape, or form," Sarge informed. "As such, you are mah Simmons. Y'all are in charge of figurin' stuff out fer Red Team. Now go out to Blue Team and see if they're looping, Classic. If'n we hear yer screams of pain and agony as they torture ya, then we'll know they're not awake. If'n y'all get hit with Sheila, they're awake."

"Voy a ir con él (I will go with him)," Lopez informed as he pulled Classic off.

"Heh-heh-heh. Lopez, you kidder, you." Sarge chuckled before turning to the appalled and nervous Legend. "Now, Legend, let me share wit' y'all th' tale of our loop. Ya see, in the hub loop we're a web-based action-comedy show that's twelve seasons in so far. If th' Blues aren't awake, we're gonna go through a baseline loop fer ya both." He tossed Legend a shotgun. "Now, take this. It's th' shotgun Ah woke up with this loop. Ah've got mah own shotgun that I named...Butch."

Legend groaned. What sort of loop had he gotten into now?

Classic 29.9: (Idea by HKGhost, written by Toko)

"I suppose you could call this karma, in a way."

"Shut up, Sparx."

Spyro sighed, his eye twitching as he stubbornly dug his claws into the ground. "I'm just glad nobody is awake to see this…"

"Come on now, Spyro! Get back to your herd!"

Spyro let out a low groan, finally hanging his head low as he headed back over to a herd of dragons. All the while, a bunch of sheep looked on to make sure he didn't try to wander off again.

Legend 29.10: (Vice-Versa pt. 2) (Feat: HKGhost, AbZ)

Cynder sighed as she stepped into the training room, trying to work out her feelings. Taking one look at the center, she growled. 'He's *here* .'

' *Of course he's here* .' A conflicting train of thought smashed into the forefront of her mind. ' *He's* always *here if he can help it. Don't know why he just doesn't sleep here. Probably would enjoy fighting in his sleep.* '

And wasn't that a frightening thought? Cynder watched the oddball dragon eviscerate the training dummies. It wasn't that he was being cruel or seemed to enjoy inflicting what would have normally been debilitating or deadly wounds, it was the speed and efficiency with which he did it. It was... 'Scary' was the first word that came to mind. And the way he was fighting now, it was so different to when they had fought months ago. Though, during that fight, had she been forced to describe it, she would have said 'terrifying,' 'powerful,' and 'wrong.'

During that fight, it had almost been as if some primal trigger had cried "Predator/Elder angry. Run away!" But with the way he was moving now, and had been since he'd come to the temple... It wasn't that he was *wrong* , it was that everything about him seemed to scream 'not a child.' Which made no sense. The guardians had tried to protect his egg twelve years ago, but it was lost. Lost at the same time that her own egg had been launched downstream to a colony of dragonflies. So, obviously, they were the same age, give or take the variance in regards to hatching.

"I wonder," said a voice with the timber of a landslide. Cynder turned from the dragon in the center of the fight—more like 'slaughter'—to

see the Earth Guardian tread lightly to her side, his eyes somehow taking in both her and the male in the center at once. "What is it that your young eyes see that makes you tense so?"

Biting her lip at being caught, she turned away. For a moment, neither said anything, until Cynder finally slumped slightly and muttered, "There's something about him... It makes no sense. He doesn't smile much. Whenever I try to... *convince* ...Sparx and him that we should all do something together, he gets this weird look in his eyes, like 'Okay, I'll humor you.' Like he's so much older and what we're doing doesn't *really* matter. And that just ticks me off!

"But it's not just that, you know? He walks into a room and his eyes dart everywhere. And then whenever he's nearing anyone...he starts moving, then stops and flinches like he had second thoughts, and it makes no sense, you know?"

A deep rumble came from the Earth Guardian and the silence between them returned for a time. Cynder kept her head turned, the edge of her vision keeping in sight the dragon who was now taking on a new wave of enemies.

"So, even the youngest among us worries about him." Terrador sighed. "But then, perhaps we have not done our best to show it..." A snort this time. "Though, we are not beings of pure logic and, even if we were, when logic states caution is required, how is emotion to act unconditionally?"

Cynder's head whipped around to lock Terrador firmly in her vision. "What?"

Terrador closed his eyes and snorted again, a small smile playing on the edge of his lips. "When you watch the boy move, what do you see?"

Cynder turned back toward the dragon in question with a frown.

"Well?" Terrador prompted.

Cynder sighed as she tried to analyze the movements that just never quite seemed to suit her. She could *use* them, but it was like she was constantly going against instincts to do it.

"He doesn't hesitate," she began. "Every step has a purpose, every strike is pinpoint accurate, and he always knows *exactly* how much force he's putting behind it. It's completely different to how he was like before..." She gathered her breath and plunged back into that horrible time. "Before... When we fought, he was cruel. He was powerful, yes, but it led to great arrogance. It was like he was insulted by the very *idea* of me. A child that could somehow luck out and harry his plans every step of the way? He didn't treat me as a threat. And when I started to land *blows* ...he lost it. Now, every move is *controlled* . It...it's different. I didn't think that someone could completely change their style like that."

"Most cannot," Terrador agreed. "Though, tell me, when you see him fight, do you see him as himself or do you see reflections of others in his motion?"

Looking over his technique again, she paid attention as he shifted from a jab to a bite and from there into "salmon climbs waterfall" before throwing his victim down, spinning down and smashing it to bits. "It looks like he's been taking and adapting from all four main fighting styles."

Terrador hummed. "But not of the standard style."

"What do you mean?"

"There are differences that I see in his movements, things that are not taught as the norm should you bring together even ten dragons who say they use the same style and compared them. That in itself is not bad. Styles should evolve as time passes. As new situations become possible, as new counters are developed or discovered... A style which does not vary, does not adapt, is dead. But the motions he makes... I see Ignitus in his counters, Volteer in his targets, Cyril in his stances, and myself in his striking motions. He uses

adaptations that we ourselves found and made, yet we have not shown him all these. At least, not as teachers."

Cynder sent him a questioning glance.

"When he came for us," Terrador continued, "under that spell's control, we all fought him. The encounter was as long as one can expect a fight. It had finished before the shadows had noticeably changed. And yet, when we fought, we did not keep our adaptations hidden. I can think of no other time when we used them before him."

Cynder looked back at the young dragon with wide eyes. "Wait, you mean he learned his style from fighting you guys *once* ?"

"And if his words are true, he didn't even have control of his body while he did," Terrador confirmed.

Cynder shuddered. That kind of skill... If they ever had to fight again, her chances were looking a lot slimmer. He wouldn't fall for the same tricks twice.

"That was not our only concern," Terrador continued. "While the situation itself is unique, as are all cases of magical interference on a being, there are some worries that our studies have shown. The fault for these lie not with him, but it leaves us wary."

"What do you mean?"

"For a plethora of factors, his life even before he became that beast was unsuitable for a dragon. Your childhood, by contrast, was almost the best that any could ask for. Had I one complaint, it was the lack of teachings on custom and decorum, but when it comes to what makes for a good childhood, that is the absolute last thing required. His childhood lacked what we would consider good role models, and it lacked love... There were so many things wrong with his childhood that, if his worldview is skewed and he is unable to ever understand common morality, it is not a surprise.

"But that puts everyone near him in danger. If he cannot understand the reasons *why* something is done—why a law exists—he cannot honor its spirit even if he must warp the letter. And if he sees one from whom he should be learning bend a law for that reason, he might come to the wrong conclusion that it is right to ignore a law, making us seem contrary and backwards."

Terrador saw the muscles in Cynder's neck tense, but continued on. She had to know both why it was necessary to be cautious around this young dragon, as well as why they *needed* to help him. "And even should that trapped path be navigated perfectly, he was not in the best position to see and understand just what that ritual was *meant* to do or what it *did* . They are two very different things. There might be magical or biological triggers that will *force* him to act in a manner that he does not desire, to strike or even kill one that he cares deeply for.

"And yet, I must restate, none of these things are *his fault* . We must be aware of these factors, prepare for them, but if we want him to be as an ally or, dare I say it, a friend, we must acknowledge and move past these things."

Had he been anywhere else, under any other extremely odd circumstances like he was now, Spyro would have left for the hills. He had actually found a cozy little cave overlooking a picturesque glade. He went there when the loops went out of control or he didn't want to be bothered.

So why did Spyro stay at the temple when, in this loop, he and Cynder had switched places? The answer was simple: he wanted to understand Cynder. While it was rare for her to depressed by her past, it still happened. Spyro would always try to help comfort her, but he didn't know how. However, now he could learn exactly how she felt. He could understand what his lover had been through, and know how to comfort her.

Spyro sat now on a balcony at the Dragon Temple, staring at the moons. He recognized their phase and duly realized that the temple was supposed to be raided soon. He turned his gaze from the sky to the forest, recognizing the exact path Cynder would take in the baseline. Letting out sigh a solemn, he rested his chin on the guardrail, slowly blinking. He could understand why she would run in the first place.

He had never realized just how much Cynder—and now him—was resented by the guardians. It was not that they insulted him or cursed his name. It was the little things. It was the way Terrador's body would tense when Spyro walked behind him, as if expecting a stab in the back. The way that Volteer would eye him up and down, humming as he studied Spyro, making him feel more like a specimen and not a living creature. There was the way that Cyril let out a little forced bow whenever Spyro left, and the way that Ignitus would flinch when Spyro called out to him, and look down at him with pity and failure in his eyes.

Their resentment and fear wasn't vocal or active, but it was there. Every moment of every day. Spyro picked up his head and gently batted his snout with his paw, distracting his mind from his weakening resolve. It would be so much easier to just leave, and maybe convince Cynder to come with him.

That is, if she would even give him the time of day. She was more vocal in her resentment, questioning his every attempt at friendship. He could barely watch her train without receiving a critical eye from her. Although she had recently lightened up, it seemed like she still remembered fighting against him quite vividly.

Spyro sighed. It was almost as lonely as when he had started looping, but this time, all the friends he knew and had looped with were asleep, and he was being ostracized instead of taught. On second thought, it was more lonely than when he had started looping.

And who could blame them. He had gone through his in-loop memories over and over again and could see himself killing, feel himself killing, and even remember the exhilaration of the blood on his fangs. In-loop memories normally never affected him so. From what he understood, traumatic in-loop memories never affected loopers as much as actually experiencing them.

Not so with these memories.

Spyro could almost perfectly feel the sensations of these memories. He had to chalk it up to how close he was with Cynder. He groaned as the unwelcome memories entered his head, as they did randomly throughout the day. This was one of Spyro personally ruining the temple and fighting the guardians.

The destruction was massive. He tore down hallways in order to kill his mentors, the guardians, his enemies. But through the destruction of his home, through the sounds of his teachers crying out in pain and the sight of their blood on his claws, Spyro smiled. He felt a wild adrenaline-filled euphoria cover him as a smile split his face and he began to delve into the memory. He remembered what it felt like to be so powerful. It filled his veins with adrenaline and caused his senses to sharpen. The memory, the traces of that lost power, they felt amazing…

Spyro immediately bit himself, sinking his fangs so deep into his paw his gums pressed against the scales. He jerked his head back, spitting the blood over the balcony. Sighing, he pulled out a simple bandage from his subspace pocket and applied it to the injured paw. As he was doing so, he counted the other bite-marks on his paws that had been made in the same fashion for the same reason. He had lost count of the scars now. Staring at them, he sighed again.

He could pick out a darkened path in the mushroom forest, one that he knew well. He would run down it often, since it was the path Cynder would run in the baseline. It would be easy to leave the temple behind. Leave behind Cynder's attitude, despite how much he still longed for her comfort, leave behind Ignitus's pity, Volteer's

fascination, Cyril's forced courtesy, and Terrador's fear of attack. All he had to do was run.

He lifted his head, looking up to the two moons in the sky. Maybe it was because he was more connected to the one who had experienced these memories originally... Shaking his head, he pushed those thoughts as far back as they would go. Regardless, Spyro clutched his head, closing his eyes as tightly as he could. No mattered how hard he tried, the memories refused to subside.

'Is this what it's like for Cynder? Even when the events are far gone now in the loops?' Spyro took a deep breath, rubbing his temples. *'I think I'm starting to understand why Cynder still dwelled on it, even with my attempts to make things easy on her. Hopefully, pushing through this loop will finally allow me to comfort her properly…'*

Running away came to mind again. That peaceful little cave and the picturesque glade...

'But how can I run from the memories?' Spyro thought to himself. ' *I can't. But I can still leave behind part of my issue.'*

He cast a second long glance over his shoulder, knowing the 'issues' he would leave behind were also his friends and teachers. He turned his head back to the moons with a sigh, drumming his claws against the stone in his restless thoughts.

"What are you thinking about?" Spyro's head perked at the familiar feminine tone.

"Nothing much," he said as Cynder walked up and stood beside him.

Spyro let his thoughts derail, wanting to just enjoy the simple pleasure of having Cynder stand by his side. An awkward silence fell between the two of them. Spyro could easily feel Cynder squirming with discomfort. Her paws shuffled across the ground and she let out small huffs of air. Her tail tapped against the stone insistently. He

continued to stare at the night sky and, after a few minutes of her tapping and moving, Cynder spoke up.

"Look, I may have been kinda harsh on you since you got here…" she said. "And I wanna say I'm sorry. See, I was learning about magic earlier today, and I finally learned what happened to you. *You* didn't do anything bad. The Dark Master screwed your mind beyond sanity, then put in his own little mind that he could control. So, I guess I have kinda been giving you crap for nothing. Sooo... Sorry."

With that, Cynder turned and left, leaving Spyro confused. She was asking forgiveness? After what he had done? He was the one that should be begging forgiveness, groveling at her feet and offering his life to repay—

'Oh ,' Spyro thought to himself as he realized how Cynder felt. He had heard her explain it a few times, but actually experiencing the feeling made him understand. His eyes went wide before he quickly closed them, his lips somehow stuck halfway between a smile and a frown.

He turned, in hopes of saying something to Cynder, but she had already left. Spyro looked back to the moons and sighed. If he was correct, Cynder would have been running away in the baseline at that very moment. There was only one thing to do if he wanted to know everything Cynder felt: relive the baseline in her position.

Looking around and making sure he spotted a yellow glowing light, Spyro leapt off the balcony and hit the ground with a firm thump. He began to run, not to his picturesque glade in the mountains, but to somewhere else entirely.

'Where do I find those Scavengers?'

(A/N: Not much to say here, really. More arcs and some silliness finally starting to raise its head in the Legendverse. I was debating whether or not it was still too early for shenanigans

like Sparx messing with possessed Cynder, but I decided to just go ahead and write it.

A lot of the sillier stuff I have planned for the Legendverse is still a ways away, and I won't lie when I say I'm getting a bit tired of waiting for the appropriate character development to happen so it doesn't feel too forced or out-of-character. True, a lot of loop compilations have the characters messing with each other from the start, but Legend is a bit of special case, considering all he's gone through. With how close he is to everyone in his loop, he'd be more inclined to scowl at anyone who pulls a prank on them than prank them himself.

True, we could just have Classic handle that, but... Let's just say there are special reasons we're keeping him out of the pure Legendverse baseline for now.

Anyways, like always, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and if you have your own snip you'd like to submit to the compilation, make sure to check out the official FF.N Forum.

Loops:

29.1: The joys of being part of an infinitely spawning mook horde.

29.2: If it's any consolation, a purple dragon that's slightly peeved at her is still better than a psychopath that brainwashed her.

29.3: Sparx has clearly got this. You're just paranoid, Iggy.

29.4: To be fair, no one likes getting sick.

29.5: Insert Mega Man 'level selected' jingle here.

29.6: This...is kind of filler. I was thinking of adding the battle to this snip, but I didn't want the chapter going on for another 5,000-plus words.

29.7: What? No tip?

29.8: I know nothing of Red VS Blue. Just putting this out there right now. If there are any loop writers who have a major problem with this snip, please take it up with the writer. Don't shoot the compiler, please. D:

29.9: I'm *still* surprised that I didn't think of this one myself.

29.10: It's always a weird thing seeing things from the other perspective.)

A short reprieve (!)

Fused 1.1 Continued (Feat: Toko, AbZ, Ukelele)

(Beta-read by Riverstyxx)

For the loopers, a trek across the world was standard fare. From Flame's perspective, this was the beginning of a grand odyssey, almost too grand for a volunteer librarian. Acting as a tour guide for beings from another dimension didn't help, either. As he looked back towards the group, he doubted he would be of any use after he'd led them to the transit station.

Cynder accompanied her mate as Legend did his best to ignore the shards of metal embedded in his scales. Ihy and the Classic loopers' voices echoed through the street, debating the motives of 'Zoth-Ommog,' the prick who was allegedly responsible for the mess that the Dragon Realms were in. Flame personally felt that the whole ordeal sounded like a comic-book crossover gone horribly wrong.

As they neared the end of the road, a defaced parking garage loomed over the group and, despite the wrecked flying saucers and laser burns, Flame knew this was it. Under this building was the transit station.

"Guys, we're here. The boarding platform is just past the gates, so we can wait for a passenger car there."

At this, Legend gave a nod.

"Good," he said to Flame before looking back at the group. "Everyone get into formation; civilians in, combats out. It may look empty out there, but we can't take any risks."

The group nodded, quickly falling into formation as they headed deeper in, the eerie silence of the transit building causing them to move uneasily. The interior flickered with malfunctioning lights.

"Ro," Classic whispered, looking over at Legend with a serious expression. "This doesn't feel right. If Malefor's attacking from Magic Crafters, he probably sent the golem army over the Convexity transit, right?"

"Maybe," Legend said, looking over to Classic for the briefest of seconds before glancing ahead again. "Though it's totally within his capability, if he's anything like the Malefor I know, he'd just summon golems and place them wherever he wants."

"Well, if that's true, why aren't there any golems guarding this place?" Classic asked, looking around with an uneasy expression on his face. "They were obviously here, judging from the wreckage."

Legend narrowed his eyes, looking around at the trashed surroundings. Classic had a point. It was clear the golems had made their way through there not long ago, and the fact that there wasn't a single soul in sight made it all the more strange. Though he didn't know much about how the transit system worked, and even with the hell going on outside, there should have at least been a few people there attempting to evacuate. What made it all the more unnerving was, while there was evidence of a fight, judging from the structural damage and burn marks, there were no bodies to show for it...

Legend shook his head, glancing down with a scowl on his face. Maybe emergency-response teams had removed the bodies? Or perhaps, the golems?

He shook his head again before looking back at the group. "I don't know what Malefor's planning, but this feels too easy. Stay alert."

Getting several nods, he looked forward again as they headed deeper in. Mangled turnstiles were barely an obstacle to the group, as even Ihy could slip through without much trouble, but when they descended the steps, they were met with a discouraging sight.

What was laid out before them appeared to have been, at some point, a warzone. Trashed passenger cars were scattered about and

broken portal-arches lay in ruin. Debris was scattered all over the place, and the walls and ground were marred with huge cracks. A good portion of the group gasped at the sight, but Legend was quick to narrow his eyes when he noticed something else.

"There's still no bodies…" he muttered, stepping forward as he glanced around. "If there really was a fight here, then how come there's no sign of casualties…?"

As Legend mulled over this, Classic stood forward with a frown.

"Alright, this might look bad, but we should still be able to do this," Classic said, glancing around. "We shouldn't need one of these car things to actually use the portal. I know in my baseline we don't, anyways. Even those who can't fly can usually just jump in." Classic glanced back at the group. "All we need is one portal heading in the general direction of Magic Crafters to kick us off. Doesn't need to be any specific one."

"I think we should at least carry those who can't fly, just in case," Cynder said, stepping forward. "There's probably a reason why these wagon things are needed in the first place."

"Eh, good point," Classic said, taking a brief pause before a smirk crept onto his face. "If that's the case, though… Not it!"

There were several chuckles within the group as Cynder gave Classic a flat glance. Flame, however, could only stare at the surroundings in silence. He surveyed the expanse of trashed passenger cars and inactive portals, fully aware of the bad position they were in. Despite this, he found himself fighting the urge to grin.

' *What the heck…?'* he thought to himself, glancing downward. *'This is terrible! Our only shot of getting things back to normal may have gone up in flames… Why is it I feel so ecstatic about that? I should be so guilty right now. I'm the one who led them here! What is going on with my mind—?'*

A heavy rumble shook the underground facility and, before Flame could investigate his questionable thoughts further, pebbles of cement rained from the ceiling.

Legend Sparx looked upward at the collapsing roof before looking back towards the group.

"So, who prefers air travel?" he offered, mouth hanging agape as his eyes went wide. "I heard there was a zero probability of being crushed by a collapsing building!"

Classic looked up with a scowl, growling, before he glanced back at the group.

"Well, so much for this idea!" he said, quickly bringing up his command line. Preferring trudging through armies of golems to a downpour of stone on their heads, Classic began preparing his teleportation spell for the group. "Look, this is just one station, right? That doesn't mean we can't find another to use! Right, Flame?"

No answer. The only response he got was the sight of the red dragon making a mad dash toward the wreckage.

"Flame?!" Classic's eyes went wide and he quickly closed his command line as he charged in vehement pursuit. "What are you doing!? You *trying* to get yourself killed?!"

"Flame!" Ember exclaimed, her eyes going wide in horror. "I knew my brother could be an idiot, but not *this* much!"

As the rest of the group looked onward in disbelief, Ember attempted to charge after the two. She didn't get far, however, as she was quickly stopped when Legend stepped in front of her.

"Stop! It's too dangerous!" he said, looking at her sternly.

"That's my baseline brother, though!" Ember said, moving left and right in an attempt to get around him. "I can't just stand here and let

him be crushed!"

"I'll go after him!" Legend said, a serious look in his eyes as he glanced at the group at large. "I can use my earth element to keep them from being crushed! The rest of you, get out of here before it's too late!"

Before Ember could protest any further, Legend brought up a solid wall from the ground and attempted to sprint after his counterpart, barely able to keep his eyes open as he ran, a steady sharp pain reminding him that shrapnel was still embedded in his legs. His determined chase weaved around falling columns and warping beams of steel, a loud crashing sound reminding him that he didn't have much time. Eventually, his attempted pursuit eroded into a forced hobble before a sudden, sharp pain caused his muscles to lock up.

Before he could collapse, a large paw swept Legend from the ground and onto broad brown shoulders. After witnessing the rest of the group trailing behind him, he swung his head around to see Ihy barreling forward.

"You shouldn't have followed me!" Legend said, trying his best to keep a stern glance despite the sharp pain forcing him to wince. "I was going to save them. I still have enough power to brace an earth barrier to keep us safe. I'm not sure if I'll be able to do that with all of us here, though."

"Cut the tough guy crap!" Ihy responded, increasing his pace. "It doesn't matter now. We're all going to survive this, so don't get all apologetic on me, understand?"

Legend looked on blankly at the group, watching as they all closely stuck by him as they ran. Cynder glanced up, giving him a grin. Legend looked around at the rest of the group, getting smiles or at least smirks from them. Before long, he looked back at the ground, a smile slowly forming on his face.

As the group followed in pursuit, Flame leapt over a pile of rubble, Classic quickly following in tow. Flame's expression remained almost blank as he ran, looking towards the innermost part of the building almost as if in a trance. Classic scowled, quickly bringing up his command line as a faint glow appeared at Flame's feet.

Before he even knew what had hit him, Flame tripped, tumbling over onto the ground before smacking into one of the transit cars. Before he could even get back to his feet, Classic was already upon him, holding him down with a scowl.

"What the heck, Flame!?" he demanded, narrowing his eyes as he growled. "What's gotten into you!?"

"I—I—I—" Flame stuttered, eyes blank as he glanced around.

Hardly a moment later, the car Flame had collided with began to shake and the lights at the front turned on. He glanced up at it, blinked, and looked back at Classic with the same blank expression.

"I found a working transit car…?" he said, a sheepish smile appearing on his face.

Not a second later, Flame jerked and shook his head, placing a paw on it where he had smacked into the transit car. He paused before looking up at Classic with a confused expression.

"What…what happened?" he asked, tilting his head. "Why are you on top of me? Am…am I dreaming again?"

Classic raised an eyebrow, frowning as he quickly got off Flame. Not a second later, he heard the rapid thumping of footsteps as the rest of the group caught up. Before anyone could say anything, Ember stood forward and slapped Flame.

"You idiot!" she said, a scowl on her face, though her eyes had a clear glint of worry in them. "Are you trying to get yourself killed!? Why did you run off into the middle of a collapsing building!?"

"I…I ran into the middle of a collapsing building?" Flame asked, rubbing the cheek Ember had slapped, before his eyes quickly went wide and his jaw dropped. "Wait, the building's collapsing!? Shouldn't we be getting out of here then!?"

The group quickly exchanged odd glances, though Classic quickly shook it off, looking at the group with narrowed eyes.

"Quick! Everyone into the transit car!" he exclaimed, running over to the door before looking back at the group. "No time to prepare a teleportation spell. We're just going to have to use this and hope it teleports us somewhere relatively close to our destination!"

Without a second's hesitation, the group began piling into the transit car, Classic taking the wheel as he brought up his command line. The car flickered to life, the interior lights coming on as he began to hack into its system. The rumbling began to worsen as debris fell from the ceiling thicker and faster, beads of sweat beginning to trickle down Classic's forehead.

Finally, the car floated up, hovering inches above the ground. Classic huffed before looking back at the group.

"Everyone hold on to something!" he said before looking forward again. "It's going to be a bumpy ride!"

The transit car shot forward, heading towards the nearest active portal. The pillars began to crumble as the whole place came crashing down, the car shooting through the portal not a second too late as the entire building finally gave way and collapsed in on itself.

The ethereal mist that was Convexity floated by as Hunter and Classic Sparx looked out of the window in awe. Odd planetoids and what looked to be giant jellyfish floated about, and a faint purple aura spread over their surroundings.

"Trippy…" muttered Hunter, scratching the back of his head.

"The teleporters back home have nothing on this…" Sparx mirrored, blinking as he looked out at the void.

As most of the group looked on in awe, at the very end of the transit car, Classic, Legend and Ember sat together.

Legend tried to hold still as Ember removed the shards of metal from his body and Classic healed the wounds. He might have scars for the rest of the loop, but thankfully he was the *only one* bearing new scars from the fight with that giant monstrosity.

"Hey, Spy," he said suddenly.

Said dragon did not stop his spell, but did take the time to lift his gaze up to Legend's face. The blue tint in his eyes made Legend flinch slightly.

"Look, I want to apologize for not explaining myself better at the beginning of the last fight," Legend said, scratching the back of his head. "When I asked you and Ember to leave, it wasn't because I didn't think you could handle it."

At this, Classic raised an eye-ridge.

Legend flinched again, a sheepish look on his face. "All right, some part of me was worried about that, but that wasn't my main reason."

Classic responded with a flat look, but didn't say anything.

"At the time, I wasn't sure if there were any other golems in the area and, out of the—what, five?" Legend glanced towards the other part of the group. "Out of the five others in our group, we only know of two that are useful in a fight, only one of which has offensive capabilities, and the other's defensive strength, while powerful, is limited to a set number of uses before exhausting himself. I wanted you two to protect them in case of an ambush. Because otherwise...it might have been a slaughter."

"Then why didn't you go with them?" Classic asked, speaking up for the first time in what had, so far, been a one-sided conversation.

Ember glanced up at them for a second, but quickly looked back down, trying to stay unnoticed.

"Because..." Legend frowned, turning his head to look at Classic with a blank expression, as if he had suddenly grown a second head. "Because the odds of survival were better with the larger group if they'd had at least one heavy hitter... And I don't leave my troops to die."

"And you didn't force the issue after Cynder got between us because...?" Classic made a circular motion with a free claw.

"At that point, had they been ambushed, you wouldn't have been able to help," Legend said, shaking his head. "They would either have repelled it on their own, or they would have been dead. I saw no reason to send you off the battlefield just to make you look at more death, especially not of those you knew." He sighed, looking at Classic solemnly. "Look, Spy, you don't have to prove anything to me. I really don't care. You don't hesitate when you have to make a choice, and that's something you proved well before today."

Classic huffed out a small laugh. "You know, things would have been a lot easier on both of us if you had taken an extra thirty seconds to explain that."

Legend smiled in agreement. "Usually when I have soldiers under me, they are so taken by the 'purple dragon' thing that they never once question why I want them to do something. It meant I made some damn stupid decisions that cost lives when I was learning how to lead even a small company. Lives that didn't need to be lost..."

As Legend closed his eyes and lowered his head, his brow furrowing, Classic frowned. It didn't take long before a smirk creased his face again, though.

"So... how many times did you make them do something really menial that you just didn't want to do?" Classic asked, tilting his head with a smug look on his face.

"That would be an abuse of power, Spy," Legend said, a flat expression on his face as he raised his head again.

Classic laughed, shaking his head with a smirk. "Stick in the mud."

"Slacker," Legend replied, a small grin on his face.

"Workaholic."

Both dragons chuckled, smiling as they let the short reprieve from the chaos wash over them. Legend winced as Ember pulled another metal shard out of his leg and cast it aside. She sighed, looking at Legend with concern.

"I think that was the last one," she said, then looked at Classic.

He nodded, glancing back at Legend and kicking his spell into overdrive. Any open wounds quickly healed, though they left visible scars. Legend grunted slightly as he picked himself up, stretching for a second. Not feeling any immediate pain, he looked over to the two.

"Thanks," he said, smiling.

"No problem," Classic said, giving a smirk. "Never thought of myself as a white mage, but don't worry. I'll patch you up as many times as need be."

A hearty chuckle rose from the group, chasing away the eerie silence of travelling through the void of Convexity, as they all smiled at one another. Well, all except one.

Ihy sat in his chair, gazing out the window with a dull look in his eyes. Sighing, he closed his eyes and leant up against the window.

"I'm so screwed after all this is over…" he muttered, resting his face in the palm of his paw.

Not far from him, reclining on the car floor, Cynder lifted her head and looked over at Ihy with a blank stare. After a few seconds of silence, she got up and slowly headed over towards him, then hopped in the chair next to him.

"You alright?" she asked, raising an eyebrow. "I couldn't help but overhear."

"No," Ihy said flatly, glancing back at her with a frown. "Tell me. Would you be okay if you knew your ass was going back to being servant boy once all this crap is over?"

"It can't be that bad…" Cynder said, tilting her head. "Can it?"

"Trust me, Cyndy, you don't even know the half of it," Ihy muttered, shaking his head before resting it in the palm of his paw once again. "Admin grunts are basically the lowest of the low. They get all the work that Admins *should* be doing shoehorned onto them and, on top of that, have to deal with being their personal errand boys. All the while, the Admins sit on their assess and twiddle their thumbs, dicking around and doing things for their own amusement, instead of actually trying to repair Yggdrasil like they're supposed to."

"They can't all be bad, can they?" Cynder asked, slowly glancing away with an apprehensive look on her face. "And, no offense, but you haven't exactly made the greatest impression on us, either."

"Yeah… I'm slowly beginning to realize that, too," Ihy said, looking back over to her with frown. He shook his head, his expression softening. "I know this may sound hard to believe, considering what you've seen of me so far, but I do try to make an effort to repair Yggdrasil every single day, even if it's only something insignificant, like a single line of code…"

Cynder blinked. Ihy was right when he said it would sound hard to believe, but as she looked up at his face, she found something she hadn't really noticed before. Though they were usually coated with a drunken glaze, his eyes at that moment carried a hefty amount of sincerity…

Ihy took a deep breath before looking out the window. "And yeah, not *all* the Admins are complete and utter jackasses. Sleipnir, admin of the Equestria branch, is quite possibly one of the most hardworking admins you'd ever meet, and one of the few that actually cares about the loopers in the branch he watches over, enough to willingly travel into horrible variants to keep them safe."

Ihy groaned, stretching back in his chair as he placed his paws behind his head. "In fact, there are a lot of us Admins who wish we could do more for our loopers, alter their baselines slightly to make things more bearable for them." He glanced towards Cynder out of the corner of his eye. "It's only because of the higher-up jackasses that we can't. In fact, despite their positions of power, a lot of them haven't really done much to deserve it."

He sighed, closing his eyes as he rested his head back against his seat. "Aphrodite is probably the single laziest Admin you'll ever meet. The whole reason she wanted to admin Eiken was because it was the least broken branch in all of Yggdrasil. Or maybe it was because she'd likely break any other branch she got her grubby hands on. I'm willing to believe either."

Ihy groaned. "Ares has to be the biggest idiot on all of Yggdrasil… I mean, what made him think Sovereign looping was a good idea!? Or *any* Reaper, for that matter!?" He placed a paw over his forehead. "Nearly caused a classic two-event crash not seen since the Mega Man branch before he finally 'got' what the loops were about."

"...And then there's Zeus."

Ihy sighed, putting both of his paws on his head. "Zeus has to be the biggest jackass this side of Yggdrasil. Despite more or less being the

head of all Admins, he rarely ever does his job, often goes on vacation *conveniently* when a massive crisis starts up, acts like a colossal dick to even his own sons, and pretty much the *only* time he acts like a proper Admin is when he's dishing out punishments to other Admins."

He took a deep breath, leaning back in his chair as he stretched. "It doesn't even matter what you did, either, no matter how small or for the greater good of your loopers. He'll break out the lightning bolts quicker than you can blink, and if you permanently altered your branch's baseline in any way—and, again, even if it's to help the loopers in it to maintain their sanity—he'll almost gleefully throw in something to 'balance out the changes made.' " Ihy groaned again and returned his paws to his head. "I still can't believe what he did to your branch after what I did."

"What?" Cynder asked, blinking as she moved back slightly, her eyes wide. "He did something? What exactly did he do?"

Ihy flinched, realizing his slip-of-the-tongue a little too late. He glanced over, seeing that the group had crowded around him during his story, and his expression flattened.

"Oh, what the hell," he said, leaning back in his chair. "I'm going to be fired once all this is over, anyways."

Ihy glanced back at the group before looking down at Cynder in particular. "Tell me, Cynder," he said, raising a paw and pointing to her. "Have you ever noticed anything off about when you wake up in the loops? Something that's a bit different than when you went through it the first time?"

"I…I'm not sure," Cynder said, shaking her head. "If there is, I likely wouldn't notice it. Even in baseline, that was a long, long time ago. I probably wouldn't notice anything if it was a small difference."

"Well, let's just say what I did was a bit bigger than you'd expect," Ihy said, taking a deep breath. Looking back down at Cynder, he

smirked. "Tell me… Doesn't it seem strange that your transformation into you-know-what and the beginning of Legend's adventure are only a few weeks apart when baseline starts?"

"I guess?" Cynder asked, tilting her head.

Ihy sighed before turning to look down at her. "Think about it. Doesn't that seem convenient? Almost contrived? After all, how is you-know-what able to establish itself as such a force and kidnap the guardians in such a short timeframe?"

Cynder blinked, raising an eyebrow as she looked up at him. After a few moments of silence, her eyes went wide and her jaw dropped slightly. "Wait, are you saying that…?"

"Yep," Ihy said, leaning back in his chair with his arms behind his head. "I altered the baseline so that 'you know what' takes place shortly after the loop starts. When it originally took place, it would have been an extreme rarity that the loop would ever start there, and that meant you would almost always wake up as…you know." Ihy glanced away, a frown on his face. "And I…I just didn't like the idea of that. So I bumped up the timeframe to give you a chance to save yourself when it happened, or so your Spyro could save you from it."

The group remained mostly silent at this sudden revelation. While some, like Hunter and Flame, could only scratch their heads in confusion, others, like Ember and Legend, looked on blankly before smiles slowly grew on their faces. Cynder looked up at Ihy blankly, her body twitching slightly. A smile slowly grew on her muzzle and Ihy jolted in surprise when she jerked forward, pulling him into a full hug.

"Wah! Okay, okay! You're welcome!" Ihy exclaimed, looking down at Cynder with a scowl. "You can let me go now!"

Legend was quick to step forward, chuckling as Ihy glanced over to him awkwardly. Legend sighed and gave him with a small smile.

"I'd like to thank you too," he said.

"Well, save your thanks until after you hear this next part," Ihy said, frowning as he looked away from the group. "Because I doubt you're going to like what my actions led to afterwards."

An awkward silence fell over the group as Cynder slowly let go of Ihy, eyeing him curiously. Finally, Legend stepped forward, narrowing his eyes.

"Why?" he asked, raising an eyebrow. "What happened.?"

"Well, as you can imagine—since I'm not exactly in the good books with the other admins, and the fact that Zeus likes to deal out punishments—my actions didn't win me any favors with him," Ihy said, leaning back in the chair and closing his eyes. " 'Ihy! We're not supposed to alter baseline in the loops, even if it is to keep a looper sane! If we do this for one looper, more are going to ask for requests like that! We're admins! Not loopers' personal genies!'"

Ihy groaned, exhaling a deep sigh before sitting back up in the chair. "I still don't get that train of logic. A looper is less likely to repeatedly crash loops if they're not insane. Regardless, Zeus didn't approve of what I'd done." Ihy looked at the group with a frown. "Apparently, keeping that event from happening changed a lot more in the loop than I expected, and in order to keep things normal, Zeus rewrote some code—for once in his Admin life—and altered things so they would be as close to baseline as possible, whether you know what happens or not."

Legend looked up at Ihy blankly, an eyebrow raised. "You mean 'The King of Terror?' "

"Partly," Ihy said, glancing around at some of the confused expressions on the others' faces before looking down at Legend. "Tell me, Legend," he said, crossing his arms. "Is there anything about the loops that seems even a tad different from original

baseline to you, apart from anything dealing with your mate over there?"

Legend paused, glancing upward in silent thought. After a few seconds of pondering, he shook his head. "Sorry, but no. I don't even remember how long ago actual baseline was, and I was too busy trying to figure out what was going on at the time to notice. Any small changes that were made probably flew over my head."

"Well, let me put it this way, then," Ihy said, glancing away from the group. "The way Malefor escaped in baseline and the way he escapes in the loops were altered quite a bit."

"What?" Legend jumped up and rushed over to Ihy's seat, narrowing his eyes. "How so?"

Ihy flinched under Legend's gaze, slowly looking away as he frowned and scratched the back of his head. "Well, you know how the Night of Eternal Darkness is when he normally escapes in baseline?"

Legend gave a slow nod in response. Ihy sighed, lowering his head.

"Well, there was a certain element that was needed in the original that is no longer needed in the loops," Ihy said, glancing at Legend. "Specifically…a dragon born on the Year of the Dragon."

"Wait," Legend said, quickly cutting Ihy off as he raised an eyebrow. "I thought that was only for his first attempt at escaping?"

"You're kind of right," Ihy said, shaking his head. "While Malefor still needed a dragon from the current Year of the Dragon to escape with his first attempt, originally, he *also* needed one for when the Night of Eternal Darkness rolled around… *Originally.* " Ihy sighed, glancing up at the roof of the transit car. "Unfortunately, Zeus decided he had other ideas on that."

He sat back up in the chair, looking down at Cynder and Legend with a sorrowful frown. "Given how long you two have been looping, it's only natural you would build up a natural resistance to Malefor's influence. As such, there was no real reason for you to travel to the Well of Souls as Malefor had planned."

Both loopers nodded, Legend giving Ihy a stern glance. Ihy closed his eyes.

"However, in direct response to me altering the baseline to make Cynder's looping experience easier, Zeus decided that, considering there'd be no dragon to free Malefor when you're awake, he shouldn't need a dragon to escape Convexity…" Ihy placed a paw over his face. "Because that twisted logic makes sense to him somehow. In any case, he made so that, even if the first attempt is a failure for him, Malefor would always escape on the Night of Eternal Darkness."

The room went silent. The loopers who had no clue what Ihy was talking about just looked blankly at each other, scratching their heads. Legend blinked, looking up at Ihy with an emotionless expression.

"So…" he said, tilting his head. "You're saying there's *nothing* we can do to stop Malefor from escaping in our baseline?"

"Not particularly…" Ihy said, looking out the window at the dimensional vortex that was Convexity. "I'm sure there's *something* that could be done in-universe to stop him. Unfortunately, the easiest way of just not going to the ominous fortress of evil on the ominously named day is no longer an option, and I can't do anything about it…"

Ihy paused, another silence washing over the group as he crossed his forelegs. He closed his eyes, letting out a soft sigh. "Listen, I don't blame you guys if you hate me now because of this. I tried to do a nice thing as an Admin, and only ended up screwing things up…and it's becoming evident that's all I'm good for…"

"At least, once I'm gone, you guys will finally have an Admin that hopefully won't mess things up like I did."

The group went silent as Ihy stared out the window. Cynder frowned at Legend, who had a blank look on his face as he stared at Ihy. Shaking his head, he glanced at Cynder and the two of them made their way towards the far end of the car, leaving the rest of the group to disperse in their own way.

Once they were a ways away from the others, Legend and Cynder looked at each other. Legend opened his mouth, attempting to say something, but all that came out was a quick exhale. Cynder closed her eyes, taking a deep breath before she looked at him with a sheepish expression.

"So…" she said, glancing down. "That happened."

"Yeah. I'm… I'm surprised I hadn't noticed before," Legend said, closing his eyes.

"How do you feel about all this?" Cynder asked, tilting her head and frowning. "I mean, I'm grateful to Ihy for what he did for me, but because of that…Malefor is always guaranteed to escaped." She sighed, lowering her head. "If I had known that, and had Ihy asked me beforehand if I'd be willing to let that happen, I would have rejected instantly."

Cynder looked up with a frown and Legend blinked, looking at her blankly.

"Don't get me wrong, the thought of having to become... *her* again terrifies me greatly," Cynder said, cringing as she glanced away. "But at least I would have built up enough resistance to avoid being tricked into going to the Well of Souls in the loops. If he hadn't altered the baseline so I could avoid becoming her, we would have had a way to keep Malefor from escaping…"

"Cynder," Legend said, narrowing his eyes. "This isn't your fault. Neither of us knew Admins were a thing before the loops started." He shook his head before looking at her with a smile. "Besides, even if he had approached us beforehand, I would have told him to go through with it."

"Huh?"

Cynder looked blankly at Legend, who gave a soft smile as he moved closer to her. Placing a wing around her, he looked her in the eyes.

"Even assuming that Malefor staying trapped would have made a difference in the war, I'd rather have to deal with him running free than you being forced to commit those horrid acts against your will," he said, pulling her into a hug. "I wouldn't have cared if he made Malefor invincible as punishment. It would still have been worth it, just to know you wouldn't have to suffer in the loops."

Cynder blinked before a small smile formed on her muzzle. Wrapping her wings around Legend, she let out a contented sigh.

"I know I've said this before, but I think it needs to be said again," she said, resting her head on his shoulder. "I'm so lucky to have you…"

The two dragons embraced for a short while, until their tender moment was broken by a low *'bleeeeeeeeeegh'* nearby. They turned to see Classic quickly ducking behind one of the chairs. At this, they both began chuckling, which soon grew into a roaring fit of laughter.

From behind his chair, Classic moaned and placed his paws over his ears.

Terrador was pacing. It was never a good sign when the Guardian embodiment of stillness and calm was pacing.

"Red, has there been any progress yet?" he asked.

Red briefly looked up from the screen to spare him a glare. "My specialty is Combat Magic, not Transportation Magic!" He huffed. Even if the Guardians were meant to be equals, he was still the newest and Terrador was the *de facto* leader. "I'm trying. I'll let you know when there is something we can actually *do* . For now, though, every other communication system is still silent and nothing's coming through. We don't know what's happening or if it's even safe to try and get to the other side."

Terrador shook his head, pausing as he looked at Red. "I apologize."

"As do I," the current Fire Guardian replied. "I think all of us have short fuses today, and the lack of food has not helped matters."

"Should I leave you to it and return with something of substance?"

" *Please* ," came the response, carrying with it all his pent-up frustration and hunger. However, just as he was exiting the room, Terrador heard Red curse. "Look's like something is coming through!"

Terrador turned, all thoughts shifting to possible scenarios. "Can you tell what it is and where it's coming from?"

"Uh...maybe?" Red replied. "I can pull up the data just fine, but there's lots of stuff in here that I'm just not sure what to do with. ...Uh, let's see... Looks like it's a transit car. Not exactly the biggest thing in the database, but it can carry passengers or other surprises. It's coming from...the Artisan Realms!"

The two dragons looked at each other. This would be their first 'outside contact' since the transit system had gone down, but, at the same time, they had no guarantee whether anything was onboard or, if there was, what the nature of their intent might be.

"Ah... uh... It should come into station three in...five minutes!"

Unbeknownst to Terrador, another dragon was furiously pacing about, incensed over his current impotency. Malefor went over the golems' security footage and the bug's recordings, failing to understand how these whelps had accrued such skill and prowess.

"Unnatural..." he muttered. "Their performance is above and beyond anything I've ever encountered, and it's likely that they're holding back."

One of the screens was frozen on a frame that captured the entire quartet, and Malefor aimed at it a glare so acidic it threatened to dissolve the monitor the image was displayed on. Not that it made much of a difference. He could throw a fit in the privacy of his lair if he so wished, but that wouldn't get him any closer toward liberating the world from its Waterian corruption. Oh, and how much corruption there was!

Since Ripto's demotion from friend to minion, Malefor had taken the liberty of scouring his memories and what he'd found made him ill. Cronyism, greed, and dubious invasions of Gnorc and Rhynoc territories in the name of defending freedom—it was all recorded by Ripto, and the rest of Malefor's minions could confirm the moral bankruptcy of the Dragon Realms' Republic.

And to think, this could all have been prevented if I hadn't let those remaining stragglers plead for innocence and make a fool out of me.

Malefor shut down the surveillance system, deciding that he'd had more than his fill of bad news, and reclined against one of many shipping containers in the warehouse. These 'loopers' would take an hour or so on their trip to Peace Keepers, so Malefor felt that a short reprieve would do no harm.

Looking up, the skylights on the roof revealed the twilight above. The moon peeked through the vast windows and, for the first time in his life, Malefor witnessed its brilliance without the murky distortion of a mile-deep ocean.

The ethereal mist of Convexity began to dissipate as the transit car pulled into its next stop. The world flashed before their eyes before they were met with a rustic-looking setting of hardened-clay walls and a palette of orange, brown and dull yellow. Legend glanced out at the surroundings with an arched eyebrow before looking towards Classic.

"Well," he said, heading over to his counterpart. "Any idea where we are?"

"Well, going off the color-scheme alone, I'd say Peace Keepers," Classic said, a smirk on his face. "They never really were known for their use of bright colors. Can't really be sure, though, given how this world has been so far."

"If it really is the Peace Keeper Realm, though, then we're in luck," Ember chimed in, smiling as she walked over to the two. "In our baseline, Magic Crafters is the next nearest major realm, which means we should be almost there."

Legend looked over to Classic, who gave a nod in response. He nodded in turn before looking towards the group at large, a stern glint in his eyes.

"Everyone, be careful," Legend said. He looked towards the transit car's exit. "Considering it's right next to Magic Crafters, there's a good chance that Malefor's influence may be stronger here."

"Yeah," Classic said, glancing over to Ember with a smirk. "Especially if the Peace Keepers are as good at keeping to their name as they are in baseline."

Both loopers chuckled at the observation, while Legend merely shook his head slowly. He glanced over to Cynder, giving a nod. She nodded in turn, a determined look on her face as she walked over to him. They glanced towards the door, steeling their nerves as they

made their way towards it. Before either could open the door, however, a voice from outside pierced the silence.

"Halt!" it called out. "Who goes there? Are you in any way associated with what is going down in the realms at the moment?"

Legend and Cynder glanced at each other, tense looks on their faces as they steadied their nerves. Behind them, Classic placed a claw to his chin, getting an odd look from Ember as he glanced up at the car's ceiling.

"I think I know that voice…" he muttered.

Legend and Cynder looked back at Classic with arched eye-ridges, but, before either could say a word, they were interrupted by a low rumbling voice.

"If you are not in league with the golems, you need not worry. If you don't reveal yourselves soon, however, we will have no choice but to do so by force."

Legend and Cynder looked at each with wide eyes before they both smiled. "Terrador!"

"Who?" asked Classic, looking at his counterpart blankly.

"The Earth Guardian from my baseline," Legend explained, looking back at Classic with a smile. "He's second only to Ignitus in command, and one of the most reliable dragons I know."

"And Ignitus is…?" Classic muttered, waving his paws in front of him as he narrowed his eyes.

Legend blinked. "Oh, right. I can't believe I haven't told you about him yet." He paused and shook his head. "No time at the moment, though. Just keep in mind; he was apparently our grandfather this loop so, if anyone asks, just say you miss him dearly and that you'd rather not talk about it."

As Classic muttered 'Got it' in response, Legend turned to Cynder, a sterner expression on his face.

"All that said, we need to be ready for anything, should this blasted loop decide to break us down even more by turning the guardians against us…"

Cynder nodded, looking Legend in the eyes. "Got it. I'll stay back to protect the others, just in case."

She lent forward, giving Legend a kiss on the cheek, ignoring the exasperated sigh from Classic in the background. Pulling back, Cynder looked at Legend with a concerned smile.

"Just be careful out there, and remember…" she said, quickly nuzzling against his cheek. "Should things really head that way, those aren't our guardians out there. Ours would never so much as lift a claw against us…"

Pulling back, Legend nodded before turning to look at the door. With a hesitant pause, he took a deep breath and forced himself over towards it. Slowly opening the door, he stepped out and quickly closed it behind him. With another deep breath, he turned towards the empty transit drop-off. Wearily looking around the arena, he made his way further in, pausing in front of the transit car. He raised his head, looking around to better observe his surroundings.

"... Hello?" Legend called out, his claws already digging into the ground in hopes of feeling for the slightest vibration in the earth. "We mean you no harm. None of us are in any way associated with the dra—" Legend hurriedly caught himself, eyes going wide at his slip-of-the-tongue. "...With whoever's causing this mess!"

He internally kicked himself. That bit of muscle memory may have just cost him, as well as his fellow loopers in the transit car, their lives. Doing his best to keep on a solid exterior, inside he was quick to berate himself over such a hatchling mistake.

It was then he heard the sound of rocks clanking. Immediately getting ready to jump at a moment's notice, Legend saw the Earth Guardian in question rounding a corner, shortly followed by a red dragon he didn't recognize.

Terrador looked down at him blankly for a few seconds before his eyes went wide. "You," he said, blinking. "You're one of Ignitus' grandchildren… Flash's child."

Legend began to relax, standing up straight on all fours as he looked at the two in front of him. He blinked as, much to his surprise, Terrador appeared to be walking on all four legs rather than two. He smiled. It was somewhat of a relief that he wouldn't have to deal with the guardians pulling any uncanny shenanigans like his loop parents and Classic. Legend glanced towards the side, noticing the other dragon, this one standing on two legs, eyeing him oddly. Legend made sure to keep an eye on him, knowing he likely wasn't out of the woods yet.

"Hey! Red!"

Legend jolted, glancing back towards the transit car as Classic forced his way out with a grin, Cynder tumbling after him not a second later, attempting to grab him by the tail. Glancing up, Cynder gave Classic a scowl as he ran up next to his loop brother. Classic looked up at Red with a grin, the elder nervously avoiding eye-contact in response.

"Ancestors have mercy, you two grew quickly," Red commented, attempting to buy time to recollect their names. "Pyro and Cyprus, wasn't it?" he guessed, obviously drawing a blank.

The grin quickly fled from Classic's face and he glanced over to Legend, who shot him a flat glance. Classic gave a sheepish grin, scratching the back of his neck. Legend shook his head before looking up at Terrador.

"I know you two are Ignitus' grandchildren, but the others I am unsure of," Terrador mentioned offhandedly, looking back towards the group as they began to pile out of the transit car.

"You didn't *have* to tell me who my nephews were," Red muttered under his breath, quiet enough for Terrador to miss.

Legend stepped forward, looking up at the two with a stern glance. "We've come from the city of Lorefang, which was—"

"—recently attacked by the golems," Terrador finished, looking down at Legend just as sternly. "We've already dispatched troops in hopes of getting it under control. It's a miracle a group mostly consisting of children managed to make it this far, let alone wind up in what is currently the safest realm at the moment."

"Pretty much the best luck we've had so far, really," Classic said, a smirk on his face as he began to push past the two elders. "Either way, don't mind us, we're just passing through. We'll be out of your paws in a moment."

"Hold on now, where do you think you're going?" Terrador asked, placing a mighty paw down on Classic's tail, stopping him in his tracks.

"Wha—hey!" Classic said, turning around and quickly grabbing his own tail. "Let me go!"

Terrador blinked, as it was only then he realized the child in front of him was adorned in ancient dragon armor. Arching an eye-ridge, he looked back at the group, noting that Legend, Cynder and Ember were also wearing their own. Terrador looked over to Red, who shrugged in response. A stern expression found its way onto Terrador's face before he looked back at Legend.

"I believe some explanations are in order," Terrador said, looking over to Red and giving him a nod.

Red nodded in return. Terrador gave the group one last glance before looking down at Classic. It didn't take much to realize he wasn't going to listen to reason, so until he could properly assess the situation, he would need to keep a close eye on him. Leaning down, Terrador picked Classic up in his maw by the tail. Classic's paws flailed wildly as he let out a low growl.

As Terrador began to head off with him, Red silently thanked the ancestors that he did not have kids, then turned towards the group.

"Come," he said, before turning back around and heading off. "With all you've been through, I doubt any of you have had breakfast yet. You can tell us what happened after you eat."

Legend opened his mouth to say something, but his stomach beat him to it, letting out a low grumble. He paused and looked back at the group as they all laughed quietly. Looking forward, a blush glowing through his scales, Legend let out a nervous chuckle. Some food actually sounded good right about then...

The silence in the room was broken only by the sound of smacking lips as the group ate their food in the mess hall, some more ravenously than others. Only when they'd begun to eat had they realized just how hungry they were. On the dinner table was an assortment of cooked meats, rather hastily put together by what little cooks remained at the base.

Legend looked down at his food with a slight smile. This was probably the first time this loop that he had encountered something that resembled food in his baseline. He leant down, taking a bite and chewing away. Though the meat was tough, it was still a welcome reprieve from how the day had gone so far. He glanced over to Classic and Ember. Classic was trying in vain to tear a piece off his food with his teeth as he held the steak in his paws, while Ember just vigorously tried to cut through hers with a knife. Legend looked over to Cynder, who was having no trouble with her meat. He swallowed his food and let out a light chuckle.

"Sorry if it's not what you are used to," Terrador said, sitting on the opposite side of the table. "Peace Keepers aren't exactly known for their cooking prowess…"

"It's fine," Legend said, a respectful smile on his face. "Nothing I'm not used to."

"Speak for yourself!" Classic muttered, still trying in vain to tear a piece off his steak.

At this, both Legend and Cynder chuckled, earning a low groan from Classic. Though Terrador let out a chuckle of his own, he quickly cut it not a moment later.

"Now then, as said before, I believe explanations are in order," Terrador said, looking sternly between the armored dragons of the group.

"Indeed."

Red held a stern aura about him as he walked over to the group, sitting down in a chair made for adult dragons. He was followed by a grey-scaled Peace Keeper, who put another plate of steak in front of him. Red glanced over to Terrador, who was sitting without a chair, all four paws firmly planted on the ground. Red sneered.

"Come now, Terrador," Red said, raising an eye-ridge. "I realize it is tradition for the guardians to walk like ferals, but surely you must realize how unsanitary it is."

"Nonsense. Part of the reason more dragons get sick nowadays is because they're too afraid to get their paws dirty. No way to build up their immune system," Terrador replied, giving Red a stern look. "As the current Fire Guardian, you will come to realize this in time."

"Temporary Fire Guardian," Red said, glancing away from Terrador with a scowl. "Need I remind you? I am a Magic Crafter, not a Peace Keeper!"

"I have never met a Magic Crafter so bull-headed as to willingly spend a week with a student to ensure they can correctly block a hit," Terrador said, giving Red a prideful glance. "You might prefer to strike with magic, but your heart is still that of a Peace Keeper."

"Bah," Red scoffed, glancing away with a scowl. "It isn't I who is being interrogated here." He shook his head, looking over towards the two Spyros. "Now then, where are your parents? And why are you in that armor?"

Legend glanced over to Classic, who was already waving his paw nonchalantly.

"We got separated from them in all this chaos," Classic said, glancing back down at his steak with a scowl. "As for the armor, my bro here is a bit of an enthusiast. Who knew it would actually come in handy."

"If you got separated from your parents, how exactly did you have time to get and put the armour on?" Red retorted, holding a claw to his chin.

Classic paused, merely giving a growl as he attempted to bite through his steak again, thankful that it at least gave him an excuse to pause and think out his next lie. Legend frowned, looking over towards Ihy. The admin hadn't even touched his food, instead continuing to type away at his laptop.

Noticing Legend's gaze, Ihy looked at him with an arched eye-ridge. Legend gave him a nod and motioned towards Terrador and Red, then gave Classic a stern look as he growled louder, trying his best to keep the charade up. Ihy sighed, shaking his head. With a scowl, he looked towards Terrador and Red.

"Would you believe we are caught in a time warp, and that these children here are not only older than you, but also far more skilled at handling the problem then you two are?" Ihy said, giving them a flat glance as he rested one of his paws on top of his laptop. "I mean, I

should know. I'm basically one of the gods of this branch of Yggdrasil."

Silence fell over the room, from both looper and non-looper alike, as all eyes fell on Ihy, his flat, scowling expression dissonantly serious in comparison to the crazy statement he'd just made. Red narrowed his eyes, glancing over to Legend.

"Who is this crazy dragon?" he asked, raising an eye-ridge.

"Exactly who he says he is," Legend said, glancing over the awkward glances everyone else was giving him. He narrowed his eyes. "Really, there's no point in trying to hide this fact anymore. We need to get to Magic Crafters as soon as possible to put an end to this."

"Right," Ihy said, looking back at Terrador and Red. "And if you still think I'm some crazy drunken idiot, how about I give you something to back up my claim?" He looked down at his laptop, beginning to type away with a smirk. "That jackass Zoth may have disabled my ability to alter the branch for the moment, but I still have enough power to peek into your lives this loop. So, in case you don't want any of your deepest, most embarrassing secrets revealed, I suggest you just go with it."

"Come now. Surely you must see that such a thing is clearly cut by Occam's Razor," Red replied, crossing his forelegs. "How do you expect ones such as ourselves, who are tasked with not only defending the Realms but also protecting and guiding the next generation, to react to such a tall tale?"

"Thursday, March twentieth," Ihy interrupted, glancing down at his screen with a smirk. "One Red the dragon was trying out some new, somewhat more *self-indulgent* spells to practice in his *private time.* "

Red's eyes went wide and his jaw began to drop.

"However, due to a tiny miscalculation on his command line, one of his spells ended up backfiring and, for that day, until he was able to make a counter-spell, Red briefly adopted the identity of Amber, his seldom spoken-of cousin visiting from Magic Crafters."

Red looked on in horror as several of the group began chuckling. Terrador gave him a blank stare as Red quickly shook his head, a scowl on his face.

"P-preposterous!" Red bellowed, slamming his paws on the table. "That is complete and utter dragon dung!"

"Really now?" Ihy said, glancing up with an amused smirk. With how things had gone so far, this was proving to be some desperately needed fun. "Then how about this…"

"Wednesday, December twenty-fifth," continued Ihy, eyeing Terrador this time. "Terrador the dragon was six years old and his parents surprised him with a puppy, who he later named Dirt."

Red turned toward Terrador with a flat look, but he merely shrugged in defence. "I didn't know what the name implie—"

"Hold on, there's more," Ihy interjected. "Upon opening the gift and seeing the dog for the first time, you immediately panicked, yelling, 'My baby! I'm not ready for you yet!' You then attempted to stuff the poor creature into your mouth."

All eyes were on the Earth Guardian now, and a remark from Red cut through the awkward silence. "Tradition may encourage you to honor the ferals, but there's such a thing as *too* feral, Terrador."

"Monday, April eighteenth," Ihy said, grinning at the rather nervous looks on the guardians' faces. "Red decided to take it up upon himself to repair his busted refrigerator, rather than go out and get a new one or call someone to repair it. The end result was him needing to be rushed to the hospital with a broken tail, need for twenty-eight stitches, and…"

Ihy paused, raising his head and an eye-ridge at the elder. "...A case of pink eye?"

All eyes fell on Red, who responded with a flat look.

"...I am a magician, not a mechanic," he said, glancing away with his forelegs crossed.

"Oh, this one's a pretty interesting one…" Ihy said, grinning as he glanced towards Terrador. "Tuesday, January twelfth. Terrador had fallen completely head-over-heels for a dragoness in his class. In an attempt to impress her..."

"Ahem," Terrador said, quickly looking towards the admin. "If I said I believe you now, would you please not read that?"

"Oh, come on!" Ihy said, grinning as he looked up at the Earth Guardian. "Attempting to learn the violin just so you could write her a song is possibly the least embarrassing thing I've read about you two so far."

"Oh, so you do have some culture in you," Red said, looking over at Terrador with a smirk. "And here you were berating Cyril and Volteer for fighting over the affections of one of the new potential Fire Guardians not long ago."

"I was young then, Red," Terrador replied, a flat look in his eyes. "We all do foolish things in our youth."

"Come on, now!" Ember said, looking up at him with a wide grin. "I actually think that sounds pretty sweet! How'd it end up going?"

Terrador looked down at her with a frown before glancing away. "Some things are...best left in the past, young one."

"Yeah," Ihy said, glancing back down at his laptop. "The fact that he went through a dozen or so violins because he kept accidentally

sawing through them is probably the least painful thing about what I'm reading here…"

Red looked at Terrador with an arched eye-ridge. Terrador shook his head, glancing away as he began rubbing his temples gently. Red smirked before looking back at Ihy.

"I don't suppose you have any more stories about Terrador on that magical laptop of yours?" he asked, subduing a chuckle as he placed a paw to his chin.

"Now, now, it's blackmail for blackmail here," Ihy said, looking down at his laptop with a smirk. "Let me tell you, Terrador has far less embarrassing stories to his name than you. Heck, half the crap you and Flash got up to as kids is enough to keep me set for several loops."

Legend Spyro raised his head at this, eying Ihy curiously as he watched him scroll down a list of topics.

"Ah, this one seems interesting," Ihy said, grinning as he clicked on it. "January twenty-first. You and Flash were at the beach during summer vacation, and Ignitus took you two there as a way to let you unwind after a particularly jam-packed year of testing. However, a certain someone didn't want to quit studying…"

Red crossed his arms, looking away with a scowl.

"Well, Flash didn't like how much of a magical egghead you'd become and decided to help you lighten up." Ihy glanced up with a smirk. "Well, what do you know. I didn't know I had programmed super-soakers into this world. Then again, I was never a fan of how most admins prefer going with knock-off brands of hub products in their world..."

Red let out an annoyed huff. Ihy snorted before looking back down at his laptop.

"The entire day, Flash kept squirting you with water while you were trying to perfect a spell that would let you teleport across the beach. I don't even have to read these next few lines to tell everyone how annoying that would get, so I think I'll just skip to the main part of this tale." Ihy huffed, placing a paw over his mouth to hide his growing grin.

"After suffering a particularly annoying attempt to get you to quit studying by being forced to take the 'ice bucket challenge,' you had finally had enough. Grabbing your training scepter, you headed towards the shoreline where Flash was and, summoning every bit of magic you had…" Ihy grinned, placing a paw on his laptop as he glanced towards his fellow loopers. "Let's just say he made the surfers on the beach that day really happy. Pretty much everyone else on the shore? Not so much…"

Classic began laughing and several of the other loopers slowly joined in. Red huffed, still looking away.

"I'm not sorry. Flash was the one who started it and escalated it to that level," Red said, a frown planted firmly on his face. "The fact that our father took his side by forbidding me to practice magic for the rest of the summer only made it more infuriating."

"Because clearly, after causing a tidal wave, he'd think it wise to let you continue practicing magic on your own," Terrador chimed in, a rare smirk on his face. "You two certainly caused Ignitus a lot of grief growing up. I don't even need this supposed deity here to tell me that."

"And again, Flash was the primary cause," Red said, looking over towards Terrador with a flat glance. "I merely gave back to Flash as much as he gave me."

Terrador chuckled, shaking his head. "Once again, though you attacked with magic, you still take after your father far more than you realize."

"Father, as in Ignitus? *My* grandfather?"

Red and Terrador shifted their attention to Legend, confused by his tone of disbelief.

"...Yes, Ignitus is my father. Therefore, I'm your uncle," Red cautiously responded. "Is there some sort of problem?"

Legend shot a questioning glance towards Classic, hoping that he had in-loop memories of this dragon who claimed to be their uncle. All he got in return was a shrug and an uncertain frown. With that established, Legend froze up, thinking of a way to handle this delicately, until...

"Yeah, here's the problem. Me and my brother don't know you as an uncle," Classic explained. "I know you as the only elder I've ever actually listened to, and I don't think my brother has ever met you until now."

Dumbfounded, Red attempted to process how his own nephews didn't recognize him as their uncle. A loud harrumph from Ihy dragged him from his train of thought, and he was met with a snide smirk from the admin.

"Loopers, remember?" said Ihy, resting his head on his paw.

Red scowled before looking back at the two Spyros. He shook his head and attempted to rationalize his nephews' bold claims. "Even so, surely you know of me? I mean, hasn't Flash mentioned me at least once?"

"Not really," Legend said, glancing down as he closed his eyes. "In the month or so we've been awake, they haven't talked about you once… Checking my in-loop memories, though, there were times where we briefly saw you, but you never really spent time with us. Outside of that…" Legend paused before raising his head with a blank look. "Nothing."

Quiet tension fell over the table. Classic and Legend avoided eye-contact with their uncle, who was now rubbing his temples with incredulity. Was he really that out-of-touch with his family that they never talked about him anymore? Red frowned, glancing downward as he crossed his forelegs.

Despite Red's obvious distress, Ihy merely smirked. "So, need I continue?"

"While it's clear that you possess some sort of seer ability to recall such events you were never there for in such great detail," Terrador said, looking down at Ihy with a stony gaze, "I'm not entirely inclined to believe you are our universe's deity. While seer powers and objects that possess seer abilities are rare, they are not unheard of to dragonkind." Terrador glanced over to the younger dragons of the group. "There's also the hard-to-believe claim that these dragons here are far more skilled than they appear."

Ihy scowled. He had hoped that would be enough, but it looked like the only way he was going to pull this off was if he did something near impossible by this world's standards, and with his abilities blocked by what was likely a ten-year-old who'd gotten his hands on his parent's admin terminal, that was out of the question.

"Please, we're not lying," Legend insisted, looking at Terrador with a stern glance. "We wouldn't make such outrageous claims unless we truly believed them. What would be the point in telling you all this if it weren't true?"

"While that may make some sense of logic to a few," Red said, looking back at Legend with a frown, "we guardians, or at least Terrador and the others, have heard all sorts of outlandish excuses in our time for a multitude of reasons."

"But it's the truth!" Classic said, leaning against the table with a scowl on his face. "What do we have to do to get you to believe us!? Conjure up a three-headed platypus!?"

"Watch your tone, Spyro," Red said, shooting a glare at him. "Looper or no looper, I am still your uncle. I will not tolerate being talked back to like that." He huffed, a smirk appearing on his face. "Besides, that's minor-grade magic at best."

"Come on!" Classic said, slamming his paws onto the table. "If we don't get to Magic Crafters soon, the entire realms will be destroyed before who knows how long! And Elora—"

He was suddenly pulled back down into his chair with a mighty yank, yelping. Classic looked over to see Legend scowling at him before glancing away and holding a paw over his face. Classic hesitated, then chuckled nervously.

Terrador looked down at the group with wide eyes, then quickly narrowed them. "Absolutely not."

Legend frowned, looking up at him. "Please, you don't understand. We're the only ones who fully understand what's going on here, and the only ones who could fight Malefor on equal footing."

"Be that as it may, if what you're saying really is true, we still cannot send you there," Terrador said, looking down at him sternly. " 'Looper' or not, you are all still children to us, and the few adults in your group barely look like they'd last ten seconds in a war zone."

"It's far too dangerous," Red continued, crossing his forelegs. "Even if you were as capable as you are saying, I am still your uncle, Spyro. Flash and Nina would kill me if I let you out into a warzone, even if what you're saying was true."

"What if we prove it to you?" Classic snapped back.

Legend turned to look at his loop-brother. From the look in his eyes, it was clear that he wasn't thinking about what he was saying. But then, the last time he had done so *had* turned out alright.

"I mean, that's how it works, right? If we could take you down, we could stop these attacks. We were fighting those things all day. And trust me, the Artisan Realm *was* and *still might be* 'a war zone!' We know where the guy who's causing all this is and we know we can stop him. So if you're not going to help us, then get out of our way, because I don't have time to waste on this!"

Silence fell over the room as Classic finished his rant. The elders looked down at him with eye-ridges raised. Terrador looked over to Red, who held a stern expression his face. Most of the loopers looked at Classic with blank expressions on their faces, but he refused to back off. Finally, at the end of the table, Cynder smirked.

"Besides, think of it this way," she said, looking towards the elders. "Even if you refuse, high chances are we're going to sneak out at night and go there anyway." Cynder glanced over towards the other loopers. "Right?"

Classic was the first one to acknowledge her words, giving a nod in response. Legend looked on with a dumbfounded expression, but nonetheless nodded as well. Ember gave a sheepish grin, glancing away as she scratched the back of her head. It didn't take long before all the loopers joined in, and Cynder looked back up at the elders.

"At the very least, this little test will allow us to judge who the most capable fighters in our group are," she said, a confident grin on her face. "If one of our group can beat one of you, then we know we don't need to worry. If they can't, then we know attempting to take them into a warzone would probably end in disaster, and so even we would feel like they should stay behind."

Legend blinked, letting Cynder's words sink in. So that was where she was going with this. At first, hearing her jump on Classic's bandwagon was a big shock, but it soon became clear to him what her angle was. She wanted to use it as a way to keep most of the group out of harm's way, in a way that would make it impossible for

them to argue. Legend did his best to suppress a grin. He never knew his mate could be so crafty.

Legend looked up towards the elders. While he hated the idea of jumping on the bandwagon and being snippy with them, he needed to do this if he hoped to keep most of the group safe.

"Well, it's like Cynder said," Legend said, a stern yet confident air around him as he looked up at the elders. "You can either try to keep us here, only for us to attempt to sneak out later—and trust me, we will manage it." Legend expression faltered for a second under Terrador's glare, but he forged on. "Or we can do this and stop any arguments from happening over who should stay or who should go."

"Finally! You two are starting to speak my language!" Classic said, looking over to them with a smirk, completely oblivious to the plan they had set, before looking back up at the elders. "So, what'll it be? If we really are just children like you think, then you should have no trouble keeping us here."

Terrador hesitated before looking at Red with a raised eye-ridge. Moments passed before Red finally gave a nod and looked back down at the group.

"Very well," he said, crossing his forelegs as he gave the Spyros a stern look. "Just be aware, I'll be telling your parents about this once all this is over."

Classic gave a nod before looking over his friends and companions with a smirk. They began chatting amongst themselves about the upcoming battle, entirely confident in themselves, as the elders got up and left the table to prepare for the matches ahead. At the very end of the table, though, Ember merely looked down in silence, a worried expression on her face...

(Oh hey. Guess what's been finally updated.

Sorry this took so long. I've been a tad busy at the moment. Not counting this, I'm involved in no less than three different projects at the moment, and the fact that winter is a butt when it comes to keeping myself motivated doesn't particularly help, either. Anyways, finally updated this again, and hopefully the next few updates won't take as long as this one.

I guess you can consider this another filler-y chapter for the mega arc, even though it has a pretty big bombshell dropped in it. Looks like Ihy isn't the complete lazy jerk we've been led to think after all, even if his actions did lead to another unpleasant outcome. Malefor needing a dragon born in that Year of the Dragon was a detail that had completely slipped my mind all this time, and GoldenGriffiness was the one who reminded me about that. That said, we did plan on Ihy being the reason for Cynder's situation from the start regardless so... hazzah, I guess! Either way, looks like Legend's still fine with it, what with Cynder being relatively safe in the loops now.

Anyways, looks like the loopers are going to have some tough times ahead them if they want to get to Magic Crafters and stop this mess. Fighting the guardians in an attempt to prove themselves is going to be quite the task... I'm sure Legend and Cynder will do fine, and Classic should be able to pull through in the end like always...but what about the rest? Find out next time!)

Ya' gonna be a contenda', Spyro!

(Snips beta'd by Riverstyxx)

Classic 31.1: (What Makes a Hero? Pt. 3)

"Everyone! Evacuate to the outer realms! Hurry!"

The sound of panic filled the air as the residents of Avalar darted to and fro, heading to the closest portal available as sky began to fill with mechanical monstrosities. Inside the castle, Elora ran as fast as her hooves could carry her, escorting a few younger fauns as she headed for Fracture Hills. She glanced out the windows, watching the robots flying all over the place. She grunted and looked back down the hall.

"What the heck is going on?" she muttered to herself. "What do these things want!?"

Elora didn't have much time to mull over that question, though. An explosion detonated in front of her, sending dust billowing down the halls and almost knocking her off her hooves. As the cloud began to clear, one of the robots she'd seen outside stared her down, raising its club above its head and charging forward.

As her shriek of terror rang out, a bolt of lightning shot from the side and struck the robot down, sparks arcing all around it. Spyro charged into the opening the robot had made, flying over it and hitting the opposite wall paws-first. He shoved off the wall with a strong kick, ramming into the bot and sending it tumbling out the window.

Taking a moment to regain himself, Spyro looked over to Elora, smirking. "You okay?"

"Y-yeah, thanks," she said, letting out a sigh. "Who are you?"

Before Spyro could open his mouth to respond, another explosion shook the hall. Giving a low grunt, he shook his head and glared sternly towards the faun.

"No time to explain! Just hurry up and escape!" he said, spreading his wings and darting back towards the hole in the wall the robot had created. "I'll keep them busy! Just go!"

Elora nodded and quickly continued her dash down the halls.

Spyro shook his head, a scowl on his face as he took to the air. *'Just once I'd like to meet Elora without something getting in the way.'*

He groaned, but knew this wasn't the time to think of that. He looked out at the many airborne robots with wide eyes, blinking as he finally had some time to take it all in.

' *There's so many of them!'* he thought, darting to the side to avoid a laser beam. *'I don't think I fought this many things at once even in my first loop with Ro!'*

"Spyro! Look out!"

Spyro glanced to the side to see a laser beam shooting towards him at blistering speeds. There was barely enough time for his jaw to drop before it was upon him, an explosion ringing out not a second afterward. Spyro held his paws in front of his face, and slowly brought them back down as the dust began to settle. Only then did the realization that he wasn't collapsed in pain set in.

Ember flew up next to him, keeping up the barrier she'd conjured. "You okay?"

"Yeah, thanks," Spyro said, looking out towards the robots flying around them. "There's so many of them." He scowled, muscles tensing as he prepared to defend himself at a moment's notice.

"I don't think even our first loop with the other you had *this* many enemies in it," Ember said, looking around with wide eyes.

Spyro narrowed his eyes, hovering back-to-back with Ember in the air. As much as he didn't want to admit it, there were far more enemies there than he was used to. Shaking his head, he brought up his command line and fired out magical blasts in the hope of slowing a few of them down.

"Spyro, I thi— *eek* !" Ember began, but cut herself off when she was forced to refocus on her shield, blocking a laser blast fired towards them. Quickly turning her head, she looked wide-eyed at Spyro. "We should probably get back on the ground! We might as well have targets drawn on us up here!"

Spyro shook his head, looking out at the robots with a scowl. Growling, he charged forward, command line at the ready as he began shooting out bolts of magic at random. "No robots are going to get the better of me!"

He flew forward, zigzagging left and right to dodge the blasts the robots fired at him, and retaliating with his own attacks. The magical bolts he fired arced off the robots one by one, causing them to spark wildly, but still they managed to maintain their balance in the air. Spyro grunted, coming to an abrupt stop to dodge a blast, quickly pulling a loop-de-loop in the air as several of the robots chased after him.

Spyro dive-bombed at the top of his arc, using his momentum to pick up speed as he slowly leveled out, flying around the castle with the robots in his wake. Ember's jaw dropped and she darted after him, but a quick blast from several of the other robots put that thought on hold. She darted towards the ground, focusing on keeping her shields up.

Spyro glanced back at the robots chasing him with a scowl. Quickly looking towards the castle, he pulled a sharp turn and flew into one of the windows, darting down the halls at high speeds. An explosion

rang out behind him as the robots slammed through the walls after him, dust flying everywhere as they pursued him relentlessly.

Spyro groaned when he looked back to see them still following. Quickly turning around, he kicked up a magical barrier and the robots slammed into it, toppling over. Righting himself in the air, Spyro flew down the hall and out over the balcony at the end, but more robots quickly took notice of him. He growled, scowling back at them. Glancing towards the ground, he saw that he wasn't the only one having problems.

Ember dodged to the left and then quickly back to the right before casting a barrier in front of her to block an incoming club from one of the robots. She flinched, taking deep breaths as she looked around at the advancing robots, then pushed her barrier forward, toppling the closest robot over.

Steadying herself, Ember quickly drew some runes with her tail, sending a bolt of lightning arcing towards the toppled robot, which sparked wildly as it twitched on the ground. She spun around, casting another barrier to block a shot coming from behind her. Her tail flicked, runes already forming.

Then Ember shrieked as her tail was forcefully slammed into the ground. She looked back in horror, her barrier dissipating, at the robot firmly holding her tail in place. Struggling to free herself, Ember looked on in wide-eyed horror as another robot charged her.

Flinching, she held her wings over her face, then heard the sound of metal hitting dirt before a rush of wind blew over her. The weight keeping her tail down disappeared. Moving her wings away from her face, Ember glanced back to see Spyro standing behind her.

"See why I don't like magical calligraphy?" he asked, looking back with a smirk.

"Y-yeah. I'm starting to," Ember said, taking a deep breath and steadying her nerves as she got back into her fighting stance.

The two dragons stood back to back, watching as the robots began to surround them. Spyro narrowed his eyes as Ember took a deep breath. Glancing back at him, she frowned.

"There's way too many of them!" she said.

"Don't panic, Ember!" Spyro said, scowling at the robots. "I can handle this! Just stay close to me!"

He growled, baring his fangs. *'I don't know who the heck these robots think they are, but they're really starting to annoy me!'* His eyes began to glow, his command line popping up as he dug his claws into the ground. *'Time to stop playing around!'*

Before the robots could so much as blink, bolts of lightning sparked in every direction, slamming into them and temporarily stunning them. Spyro smirked, pulling two supercharge orbs out of his subspace.

"Ember!" he said, turning around and tossing one towards her. "Catch!"

Ember turned around, fumbling the orb in her paws for a few seconds before grasping hold of it. She looked down at it before looking back up at Spyro. He nodded, smirking, then looked towards the advancing robots in front of him. The orb quickly disappeared in his paws and Spyro went charging forward, sending the robots flying as he plowed through them.

Ember glanced back at the robots advancing towards her before looking down at the orb with a frown. Giving a sigh, she absorbed the orb's magic into herself and charged forward with a shriek, plowing through enemies as she struggled to maintain her balance. The two dragons ran through the plains, toppling countless robots over and leaving them sparking wildly in their wake.

Slowly, one by one, the number of robots began to dwindle, and the wreckages of robot husks littered the ground. Spyro skidded to a

stop and Ember followed suit, digging her claws into the ground and skidding to a stop next to Spyro as she desperately tried to catch her breath. He looked over to her with a smirk.

"Not bad," he said, his smirk turning into a grin. "Not bad at all."

Despite her exhaustion, Ember managed to smile. "Thanks. Not exactly a fan of the supercharge, though."

Spyro chuckled before looking back up at the sky. Four more robots came flying down in front of them. Spyro huffed, watching the rest begin to fly off into the horizon.

"Yeah!" he yelled out, grinning. "You buckets of scrap better run!"

Ember looked up at the fleeing robots blankly before looking towards the four robots standing in front of them. Shaking her head, she frowned at Spyro. "Spyro, I have a bad feeling about this…"

He shook his head, still watching the robots fleeing into the distance. He smirked, but paused when he noticed another blimp heading towards them at high speeds. Before either of them could react, something slammed into the ground in front of them, kicking up a cloud of dust. Spyro and Ember raised their wings over their faces, waiting for the dust to settle.

Once their vision cleared, Spyro removed his wings from over his face and his jaw nearly dropped.

A robot at least twice the height of the others stood in front of the four smaller ones, its body in the shape of a dragon. It shared the same color-scheme of the other robots: black with gold trim along its body, though the top of its head was white. Its metallic wings were folded at its flanks, and its tail twitched back and forth. It gazed down at the two dragons with startling blue eyes and opened its robotic maw, letting out a loud roar.

Ember flinched, taking a few steps back as she covered her ears. Spyro merely dug his claws into the ground, looking at his new opponent with a smirk.

"Nice try, bolt brain," he said, already bringing up his command line. "But if you think a robot dragon is going to stop me, then guess again. I'll have you know I've already fought one before—several times, in fact—and he was twice the size you are now!"

He glanced back at Ember, watching as she began to regain her composure. Giving a nod, Spyro turned back towards the draconian robot and charged forward, electric sparks arcing around him.

Legend 31.2: (Legend of Spyro/Vanguard) (Feat: AbZ)

Spyro had endured some abysmal variants before, but this one was looking to take the proverbial cake. It had started normally enough. Like always when Cynder wasn't awake, he had freed her at the first opportunity: a not-so-chanced (on his part) encounter at Dante's Freezer. Then, they'd run through the 'Gaul, King of Terror' phase. He couldn't recall doing something that would have upset the balance this badly and he *knew* it wasn't because of Sparx, as he seemed to be the only one awake in this loop. Yet, for some reason, upon being freed from crystal, he'd found that everything had apparently gone to hell.

Malefor's armies ravaged the land as per usual, but what was not usual was that the areas that the Dark Armies vanquished would then join their oppressors. And then there were the black rings forming in the sky... They had covered most of the world. The only currently untouched area was the countryside in the shadow of the great city of Warfang, and even there a dark presence lingered. The civilians scurried about their tasks with hunched shoulders; the militia scanned the bleak horizon for the inevitable. Mutterings of doom hung in the air.

Spyro sighed. What to do? What *could* he do? It was only by the ancestors' grace and intervention that he was able to stop Malefor at the loop's end, but this could not continue. The attack was soon coming. He had to make a decision. But what good would it be to stop Malefor and doom the citizens? Things had already turned far bleaker than they should; there was no guarantee that, by cutting off the head, the snake would also die... No, this was more of a hydra. Sever one head, two more grow in its place.

Why did it always have to be him? He'd never asked for this, damn it! He'd never asked for his scales to be purple, for responsibility far beyond his age, to be an , Spyro indulged his silent rant to the heavens. Then he put it to the side, because it wasn't getting him any answers.

His worry spent, his mind drifted back to that damning phrase of lost wisdom: *"The purple dragon shall guide the fate of the era."* It would be by his choices, by his action or inaction, that the world would turn. There had to be a way... There just had to. He needed to take down Malefor, that much was certain. It was the reason Ignitus had hypothesized he was born. But to do it without care for Warfang would result in its destruction as surely as leaving the gate open when he left.

The city, while temporarily defensible, could not survive forever. But then, the citizens were never *in* Warfang at the loop's end, were they? They were always in the tunnels. The same defensible tunnels that had one-way locks, where the only passage though was too small for great numbers to mean anything. Could they survive indefinitely? Perhaps not, but they shouldn't have to. Once Malefor was stopped, the driving force behind this war would be gone and they could finally regain lost ground.

Spyro smiled. It wasn't a perfect plan, but it was one they could enact quickly, and hopefully it would be enough. It didn't have to be perfect, just *enough* .

The guardians had been suitably uneasy when Spyro had presented his solution to them, seeing it for the final gambit that it was. But perhaps it was the hope in his voice, or the look in his eyes that was far too old—one that let them know Spyro understood *exactly* what he was asking of them—that finally made them agree. And now there he stood, alone—having quietly hidden away the chain that had magically bound Cynder to him—against the full might of the Dark Master's armies. His body quaked. His breathing slowed. His eyes snapped open.

He struck.

His body was a blur, the embodiment of nature's wrath. Fire danced; electricity sparked; ice encroached; earth rose; magma boiled; steam hissed; plasma shrieked. A hole opened in the forces and the dark warriors turned to see the cause. Spyro was all but in Fury, lashing out, carrying the full weight of the dying hope of his world on his back. So the conscience controlling them decided to have him be crushed by it.

A word reverberated throughout the army. " *Lock* ."

And Spyro stumbled. *How* ? How could he be cut off from the elements? No, not cut off... It was if there was a great expanse between him and them. One which could not be bridged in the time he had.

As a show, the conscience sent forth the mightiest of its forces, the one that had granted it power over the masses, the first and greatest of its servants on this miserable planet. Its Alpha, and what would now be its Omega.

Spyro hyperventilated as the impossible came and, with it, Malefor himself stepped forward to challenge him. To challenge another purple dragon with no powers? Not even fools would dare it. This loop... It was wrong. It was as if someone had rewritten the order of things halfway through, without care for the consequences.

Malefor's blows were stronger than ever before. In desperation, Spyro cried for the strongest defence he could think of. Earth and ice. And, to everyone's great surprise, one of his oldest compatriots leapt to his aid as the battlefield became covered in crystal.

Spyro blinked, finding himself in a white void. Blank. Had he accidentally set off a loop crash?

"Not quite," a voice said from behind him.

Spyro twisted to see...another dragon. At first glance, one might have mistaken it for an electric dragon, but the scales were deeper, fuller, more regal. Gold on purple.

"What are you?" Spyro asked.

"That's a tricky answer," the dragon replied. "I guess you could say I'm a portion of your mind that represents your connection to the elements. So, in a way, I am both you and not you at the same time."

"You're not mad at me, are you?" Spyro asked, unfortunate memories of what happened the last time his emotions had shown up jumping to the front of his mind.

"No, not particularly," the other replied with a shrug.

"Then why...?"

"Because you needed time to think about what just happened, and a pure void would have been counter-productive," the stranger replied with a smirk that Spyro knew too well from his other-world counterpart.

"What happened? I just had my connection blocked and called out in desperation," Spyro said slowly.

"And an element responded. One you've known for quite a while now, in many ways," was the reply.

Then Spyro's mind clicked. Ice and earth. Crystal. Order. To remain the same, even in the face of overwhelming change. The other half of time.

Crystal and plasma. Fire, electricity, ice and earth. Time. Convexity. Were they one and the same?

"Time is but a facet of the monolith that you know as Convexity. One to which you specifically are attuned. While we might not be able to access our fullest powers now, we will never be separated, unless *you* will it."

Spyro's eyes lit up. "Then..."

Time only nodded.

The crystal shattered and all seemed as it was before. Spyro took to the skies, Malefor in hot pursuit. Victory was in his clutches. Then the world held its breath and a pulse of power rang out from Spyro's body. In one moment, he was about to be snapped in half by Malefor's jaws, and the next he was diving on the adult's exposed back, slashing through and cutting his wings.

In any other loop, this probably wouldn't have worked. But, in any other loop, Malefor wouldn't have expected Spyro to be powerless.

Spyro then crashed down on the armies and finished his job for the loop.

Classic 31.3:

Spyro stared blankly as a train flew by far above him, while a duck with three wings flapped overhead. Or rather, this was happening

below him, considering he was currently on the underside of some sort of planetoid. On his left, he noticed Agent 9 attempting to catch a fish, but he only ended up plucking a spider out of the water, which then proceeded to give him a hug. Agent 9 opened his mouth and the sound of an owl crowing came out of it.

Spyro shook his head, rubbing his temples. After a few seconds, he sighed and glanced up at Sparx.

"Should I be worried that, instead of thinking Yggdrasil's falling apart, I'm thinking this is just Ihy falling off the wagon again?" he asked, raising an eye-ridge.

Sparx opened his mouth to respond, but instead of giving a solid answer, all that came out was the sound of a foghorn.

Spyro rolled his eyes.

Legend 31.4:

Just outside one of the ominously evil towers that surrounded what was usually Cynder's fortress—though, now it was once again the King of Terror's stronghold—an ape glanced towards the sky, watching a dreadwing fly past. It dropped the barrel of dynamite it was holding and the ape glanced back, seeing another pile of dynamite behind him. He gasped, quickly jumping up and away as the barrel of explosives hit the cart of dynamite.

The ape went soaring hazardously into the air, a mighty explosion thundering around him as the crimson and orange glow of billowing flames lit up the night. Time seemed to slow and everything seemed to blur. The ape felt like he was thrown from his body, watching everything spin around him, seeing his fellow comrades running away in slow motion. All the while, he was cursing the idiot who thought dropping dynamite on his own comrades would help stop the dragons tearing through their base.

Finally, time began to flow again and the out-of-body experience came to an end. The ape found himself falling towards the ground, where he was promptly head-butted by a purple dragon and flung backwards, exploding into a pile of spirit gems.

Spyro blinked, looking down at the spirit gems with wide eyes. Cynder walked up next to him, a blank look on her face. Spyro looked over to Sparx, who shrugged in response. Shaking his head, Spyro glanced back at Cynder.

"Sorry, Cynder..." he said, a bemused expression on his face.

"...We're not entirely sure what's up with this part of the baseline, either," Sparx added, crossing his arms.

Classic 31.5:

Dark Gems were always an oddity in the loops. Their most common effect seemed to be warping the areas around them into dark and twisted versions of themselves, but a lot of the time they also had a second effect. Most commonly, that was bringing out the worst personality traits of anyone in the general vicinity.

That wasn't always the case, though. Some of the secondary effects were odder than others, like turning everyone's scale-color blue, or making the people around the gem speak a different language, or making anyone in the vicinity become intoxicated. Though, the last of those Spyro just chalked up to Ihy falling off the wagon for the thousandth time in a row.

However, this loop was proving to be the oddest one yet. Spyro watched on as three Hunters ran past, chasing a mob of identical-looking Gnorcs, his expression flat. In this loop, Dark Gems had the added extra ability of duplicating anyone who got close to them an indeterminable amount of times.

Spyro shook his head before looking down at the Shadow Stone around his neck. Normally it was used to traverse into the Shadow Realms, but this loop it negated the added effects of the Dark Gems —at least, for the one wearing it. He walked forward with an amused expression. While an exact duplicate of himself would be nice, three Spyros running around would have been a bit too much, even for him. He already had Ro.

Chuckling to himself, he looked up at the golden dragonfly following him…and the five others trailing after them. Sparx smirked, holding up a conductor's baton at his five duplicates, all of whom were dressed in blue shirts and straw hats.

"Alright! One, two, one, two, three!"

" *We were sailing along, on a moonlit baaaaaaaay! We could hear the voices singing, they seem to saaaaaaaaaay!"*

Spyro snorted, looking up at Sparx and his clones with a smirk. "Nice to know you're enjoying yourself."

"Well, yeah!" Sparx said, looking down with a smirk. "I finally found some other Sparxs I actually like! Why wouldn't I be enjoying myself?"

Spyro rolled his eyes before looking forward at the latest Dark Gem they'd come across. Sparx and his five duplicates watched on with a blank stares before Sparx-prime looked down at Spyro.

"Uh… Spyro?" he asked, flying down next to him with a growing frown. "Ember wouldn't, by chance, be awake this loop, would she?"

"Uuuh…" Spyro paused, glancing upward as he placed a claw to his chin. "I don't think so…" He looked at Sparx with a raised eye-ridge. "Why do you ask?"

Sparx opened his mouth to reply, but was cut off when a sudden rumbling shook the ground. Spyro and all six Sparxs looked around

with wide eyes before Spyro glanced towards the Dark Gem.

" *Spyroooooooooooo!"*

His pupils shrank three sizes at the sight of the wave of pink dragonesses running towards him. Letting out a meek *'mommy!* ', Spyro about-faced and flew into the air as fast as his wings could carry him, his newfound fan-club flooding past not a second later.

Legend 31.6:

Spyro looked up at Sparx with annoyance. He would have asked how his dragonfly brother had convinced him to let the sky pirates capture him again, if it wasn't for the fact that Sparx was unnaturally good at getting him to go along with the baseline all for the sake of a specific joke. Instead, Spyro just looked up at the dragonfly flatly.

"Alright, Sparx," he said, raising an eye-ridge. "What is it you wanted us to come here for?"

Sparx smirked before spinning around in the air. Reaching into his subspace pocket, he pulled on a tiny green jacket, followed by a dark green hooded cap. Still smirking, Sparx raised his fist in the air.

"Awright, Spyro!" he said, lowering his tone and attempting to make his voice as gruff as possible. "It's time to show these second-rate clowns what ya got! We're goin' to the top this loop, Spyro! When we're done, ya gonna be the pirate league champ!"

Spyro looked up as Sparx did several mock punches in the air, smirking as he attempted to keep his false accent up. Spyro blinked, looking on blankly at the display, then frowned and shook his head as he got up.

"Really, Sparx?" he said, sighing as he headed over to the cell bars.

"Come on, Spyro!" Sparx said, giving a rather weak uppercut. "Ya can be a contenda'!"

Spyro rolled his eyes before looking back at Sparx with a flat glance. "Sparx, you know how I feel about this place. Forcing beings to fight for the amusement of others is flat-out wrong." Spyro's glare turned sharp. "And while there are some who like to fight, I am not one of them."

"Oh, come on, Spyro!" Sparx shouted, finally dropping the act as he crossed his arms. "You could at least humor me here!"

"Sorry, Sparx," Spyro said, turning around towards the cell bars. "You know I don't like to fight unless I'm forced to, which is going to be the case getting out of here."

He took a deep breath, readying his flames as he stared down the wooden cell bars. He mentally rolled his eyes at how the pirates thought it was a smart idea to keep a *dragon* locked up in a wooden cell. It was even a revelation he'd had in baseline, though he'd been far too weak at the time to take on an entire army of pirates. Now that the loops had built up his strength considerably, it was time to teach them the folly of their ways.

Flames crackled in his mouth as he went to exhale…but he quickly swallowed them back down when he saw what was approaching them, coughing up smoke instead. Feeling like he'd been punched in the chest, he looked back up and his eyes went wide.

Several of the pirates came walking past, carrying a burly ape that looked to be on the verge of unconsciousness. His face was battered, bruised and swathed with bandages, and he had two black eyes. The ape moaned, unable to walk on his own two feet as he was dragged back to his cell.

Spyro blinked at the sight, then watched as another creature was also dragged back to its cell. This one was a scorpion creature, it's

exoskeleton cracked above its eyes, which were spinning in its head, and its stinger tail bent back, the base of it sporting a large crack.

Spyro pushed his head as far out of the cell bars as he could without getting it stuck, seeing more creatures being carried back to their cells, their faces and bodies bruised, barely able to stay conscious. Spyro watched the sight with wide eyes before pulling back into his own cell.

"Well…that's new," Spyro muttered, shaking his head as he glanced up at Sparx.

"Seems like ya got yerself a rival, Spyro!" Sparx said, quickly raising his fist into the air again.

Spyro's expression went flat. "Sparx, please. Give it a rest." He glanced back out at the corridor, seeing more creatures being hauled back to their cells. Spyro narrowed his eyes. "There does seem to be something going on here, though…"

"Think it's anotha' loopa'?" Sparx asked, flying down next to him.

Not even acknowledging Sparx's attempts to keep the fake accent up, Spyro nodded. "Quite possibly. Shame that they looped into here of all places."

Then he blinked, watching as a giant griffin was dragged back to his cell, a cracked beak and a bruised eye being the least notable of his injuries. Spyro flinched, raising a wing over his eyes.

Sparx shook his head. "Sheesh, tough competition."

Spyro gave Sparx a flat glance before looking back through the bars. Whoever this mysterious victor was, it was definitely someone he'd prefer not to encounter in the arena. Taking a deep breath, Spyro began to summon his flames once again. Before he could let them loose, though, one of the pirates came hurrying towards the cell bars.

"Purple dragon!" the pirate exclaimed, the scowl on his face doing a poor job of hiding the look of terror in his eyes. "You're up next!"

Spyro looked at the pirate flatly, then let a surge of flames be his reply. The pirate went stumbling back as the wooden cell-bars gave way, and Spyro walked out not a second later with a scowl on his face. He looked down the hall, seeing three more pirates rushing towards him. Spyro quickly got into his attack stance, electricity crackling in his jaws.

Said electricity dissipated and Spyro stared blankly when the pirates fell to their knees and clasped their hands in front of themselves.

"No, wait! Please!" one of the pirates said, eyes wide with horror.

"Don't escape just yet, purple dragon!" the second one added, gasping for air.

"You're probably the only one who could stand up to that pintsized powerhouse!" the third pirate chimed in, expression pleading as he shook his hands back and forth.

Spyro blinked. In the many loops he'd gone through that involved the pirate ship, never once had this sort of scenario occurred or even come to mind. The pirates were basically begging him to help them. Spyro looked on, dumbfounded, before he finally blurted out the obvious question.

"What the heck is going on!?" he asked to no one in particular, staring around blankly at the terrified pirates and the battered and bruised gladiators.

"It's awful!" pirate-number-one proclaimed.

"It's horrifying!" pirate-number-two added.

"It…would actually be kind of funny if we weren't so terrified," pirate-number-three said, a hand on his chin as he glanced upwards.

The other two pirates glanced at the third with flat looks on their faces, before looking back at Spyro. The first pirate stepped forward, grasping his head.

"It's nuts! One day we were flying past a village and decided to dock in order to...refill our supplies." The pirate glanced away with a frown. "We weren't planning on pillaging it, honest!"

"But when we did, we were approached by two cheetahs who heard about our gladiator arena and wanted in," the second pirate continued, grasping his head in the palm of his hand.

"The one who wanted to fight barely came up to the other cheetah's shoulders, so we thought, at the very least, it'd be entertaining," the third pirate chimed in, tapping his index fingers together as he glanced down.

"But it's been an utter nightmare!" all three said in unison.

"That little terror of the ring has knocked out some of our highest competitors! Most of the time without even breaking a sweat!" pirate-number-one shouted, his eyes wide with horror as he grasped the top of his head.

"As if that wasn't bad enough, we can't even get him into his cell without him knocking out half our crew!" pirate-number-two proclaimed, scowling back down the hall.

"Poor Johnson was in a coma for three days thanks to him…" pirate-number-three stated, crossing his arms as he looked down with a worried frown.

"Please!" pirate-number-one said, moving forward and grasping his paws together. "You have to help us get rid of that pintsized freak!"

Spyro looked on blankly at the pirates standing in front of him, pleading for his help, as behind them more badly bruised combatants were taken back to their cells. He blinked before

scowling down at the pirates. He was never one to turn down someone in need, but the pirates were a special case, after everything they'd put him through.

"Why should I?" Spyro asked, narrowing his eyes. "This gladiator thing shouldn't even exist in the first place! Plus, you kept me locked up in a cell this entire time like an animal!" Spyro scoffed. After how many loops he had been through, it was finally nice to get to call these pirates out on their wrongdoings. "Why in the realms should I help you set such a horrible thing up again?"

"Wait, didn't he just break out of his cell easily a few seconds ago…?" the third pirate asked, but was quickly silenced by a smack to the back of the head.

"Please! All we want at this point is for that terror to be gone!" the second pirate said, looking pleadingly at Spyro.

"If you get rid of him, we'll promise to put an end to the gladiator games!" the first said, shaking his clasped paws in front of him. "We're that desperate!"

Spyro rolled his eyes, looking at the pirates with a stern expression. "And how can I make sure you'll honor your word?"

One of the pirates started to speak, but was cut off by a low moan coming from the arena. Spyro blinked, watching as the hulking form of Skabb came stumbling out of it, on the verge of unconsciousness, his face mirroring the battered and bruised visages of the other beaten gladiators. It didn't take long before he collapsed, the occasional twitch being the only sign he was still conscious.

Quickly, pirate-number-one ran over to him, eyes wide with worry. "Captain!" he said, trying to help him up. "Captain! Are you alright! Say something!"

All that came out was a low, incomprehensible mishmash of what could barely be considered words. Pirate-number-one blinked, then

tilted his head.

"Is that a yes or a no?" he asked, scratching his head. "It's kind of hard to tell without Scratch or Sniff here to translate…"

As if on cue, two birds came flying out of the arena, similarly battered and bruised. They quickly flew over to Skabb, barely able to stay in the air, and dropped a second later, bouncing off the giant pirate, unconscious. The pirates and Spyro looked on blankly before pirate-number-two looked back at Spyro.

"Please!" he begged, cupping his paws in front of himself. "Other than you, the only one who likely stands a chance is the Terror of the Skies, and she—"

Spyro jolted, his eyes going wide in realization. Cynder was aboard the ship, too. He couldn't believe he'd forgotten. Had she been awake, it would have been a different story, and he wouldn't have been as worried as he was. However, she wasn't, and while her baseline self was good at fighting, loopers were generally in a different league altogether. Spyro shook his head, a stern expression on his face. He didn't like it, but he was going to have to compete after all and, at the very least, he could try to kill two birds with one stone.

"Alright, I'll help," he said, cutting the pirates' ramblings off. "But you must promise that you'll shut this place down once I do, and *don't* try to stab me in the back. If I can stop someone who's causing your entire crew nothing but nightmares, I can and will shut this place down by force if I have to." Spyro narrowed his eyes. "Understood?"

"Yes, yes! We promise!" the pirates chirped in unison.

"Just get rid of that pintsized nightmare already!" one of them added, quickly getting out of Spyro's way.

Spyro gave a nod, making his way past the pirates and towards the arena. Sparx grinned, flying next to Spyro with a wide grin on his

face. "Awright, Spyro! Here's ya big chance to show 'em what ya got!"

"Sparx, please. Give it a rest."

Spyro blinked as he walked into the arena, eying his opponent with a blank stare. When they said 'pintsized,' they weren't kidding. The cheetah in front of him, who was wearing only a pair of shorts and oversized gloves, would have barely reached the shoulders of the average cheetah. Despite this, the cheetah smirked confidently as he walked into the ring with paws raised.

"That's it, Mac baby! Show this dragon that purple don't always mean powerful!" a voice called from the stands. "Hard work and determination always trumps natural talent! Show 'em what you got!"

Spyro raised an eye-ridge, looking up to see a large chubby cheetah in a tracksuit looking down at the arena, a chocolate bar in his paws.

Spyro glanced over at Sparx, seeing the wide grin on his face. He sighed. Sometimes he could have sworn the loops bent to Sparx's will…

Classic 31.7: (Hurricane Billy) (Feat: Evilhumor. Minor context at start added by Toko, as well as a minor addition at the end)

It was a bit rare to see such a collection of loopers from different universes in one spot, but there was a good reason for this. Recently, a certain looper from a certain universe, anchored by the Grim Reaper of all beings, had begun looping. No sooner had he started did most of the loops he appeared in end in disaster. Loop crashes, looper death, beings who *never* should have started looping beginning to loop… It was terror for every looper involved.

The worst part? The looper in question wasn't even trying to do it on purpose. No, this looper was just *so ragingly stupid* that it was

almost, and in most cases, *literally,* lethal to all those involved.

In response to this, Grim and another looper from the verse, Mandy, had called a meeting of loopers to figure out how to finally deal with the problem. No sooner had it started did loopers begin recounting horror stories of their experience with 'Billy,' a certain purple dragon included…

With a thud, one of the Spyros threw his head against the bar counter. "If you're all talking about how Billy screwed up your loop, I've got a story to tell." He groaned as he began to drink his cider. "I don't know *what* he said to Gnasty Gnorc, but whatever it was pissed the guy off enough that he *nuked* all the Dragon Realms with his magic, destroying all the magic keeping the worlds and realms stable." With a sigh, he took a long sip. "Worst part was the nuke attack *didn't* kill me, forcing me to deal with a nightmarish loop where the realms and worlds were slapped together in ways that *should not happen!* "

Spyro leant back in his chair, giving a groan. "And I thought drunk Ihy loops were weird… Somehow, Billy topped it when he caused Gnasty to create a race of ninja gophers that ran on slime, whose homeworld was completely inverted color-wise and made of cheese…"

Legend 31.8: (Avatar: The Last Airbender x Legend of Spyro) (Feat: AbZ)

Spyro awoke to the rising sun, a steady lurch beneath his feet that he was already compensating for, and the odd feeling that tended to come from standing on two legs with no tail for balance. Why did so many worlds have these strange creatures called humans?

With a slight sigh, he felt his in-loop memories kick in. Okay, those deserved a second look-through later, but the most pressing issue was why he was out here. Apparently, it was for a morning ritual of practicing some kind of fighting forms. When he saw them, he

smiled. An adaptation of fire element forms for humans? Since it seemed he wasn't going to be a dragon in every loop, and more often than not he'd end up a human instead, that could be useful.

Instinctively, Spyro began moving through the first set, still pondering his in-loop memories. It seemed as if only the Avatar could manipulate more than one element at a time...

Avatar. Where had he heard that term before?

That was it! Jenny Everywhere had called him an 'Avatar Dragon' when she had explained the loops to him. This must have been one of the loops that she had visited. Not that that knowledge helped him in any way; he'd never learned much about that world to begin with.

Looking through his memories again, he tried to figure out what his role was supposed to be. Was he filling in for this 'Avatar,' who was probably a local anchor? That also brought up the question of if he was the only one awake in this loop.

With a grimace, Spyro returned to the memories of why he was currently on a ship. It seemed that there had been a war going on for the last twenty-three years—war that had begun before he could possibly do *anything* to stop it, no less—sparked when the Earth Kingdom had assassinated the Avatar, a Water Tribe woman from the South Pole. Going by the cycle, the next Avatar should be an Air Nomad of about twenty-two years, but there were doubts.

The Air Nomads were the most spiritually inclined people in this world. That they couldn't find the Avatar among their own nation suggested that the Avatar simply wasn't there. Which, in itself, was not such a strange idea. After assassinating the Avatar, the Earth Kingdom had sent terrible opening offensives into both the Fire Nation and Air Nomad land for years, until finally conquering those lands. It would have been easy for a child to perish unnoticed in the chaos.

If that had happened, the Avatar would next have been born into the Fire Nation—Spyro's own nation. But they hadn't known to search for the Avatar among their children, which meant that they were even more unlikely to find a Fire Avatar. That is, if it wasn't *him* in this Loop. It *was* his job to set the world right...

And again, had there *been* a Fire Avatar, it was also likely that they had been killed in the chaos caused by the Earth Kingdom invasion. Which meant the next Avatar might be in the Earth Kingdom, being raised to see the other nations as inferior and deserving of being wiped out. A person whose job it was to guide and protect the world, raised by mad-people... But Spyro couldn't be sure.

He had been a young child when the Earth Kingdom had struck his homeland and forced his people to evacuate, becoming refugees on the ocean. The only safe havens for them were ships of wood or, for those learning to bend fire, metal; some of the few materials that Earthbenders couldn't affect. Lovely.

It seemed as though this 'bending' used a different energy than his usual elements. It almost felt like one of the few times he'd tried his hand at Dragon Kata chi. It would have been interesting to see what Ember could do with it...

Well, there might be one way to check if he was supposed to be this 'Avatar' for the loop. As Spyro ended his sequence, he held himself in place and let his chi flow into the metal below him. He recalled that Terrador—at least, the Terrador from that first loop where he'd met his counterpart—could alter metal through earth mana, but Spyro had never gotten beyond merely feeling the differences and similarities between metal and regular earth. The best way he could describe it was that earth was a union of many kinds for a common goal. Metal was much more isolated, singular in its being, but stronger in its identity for that. Thus, it resisted more.

But, once overcome, metal was perhaps easier to manipulate because it stayed aligned to one's mana—or, in this case, chi. Terrador had speculated that it would be almost impossible to

wrestle metal from someone else's control, even if they only casually maintained their grip. There would be nothing for the stealer's mana or chi to latch onto.

Spyro breathed in and out. Inhale, exhale. There. He could feel the beginnings of the tremor-sense that he had developed with his mana. And, as the Avatar was supposed to be the only one who could 'bend' multiple elements, it looked like it *was* his job to fix this mess. Lovely.

Spyro let out a sigh. Knowing his luck, even though the last two *should* be mutually exclusive, this loop would find *some way* to make the last one happen.

It was nearly an hour later when their ship first spotted another coming off the horizon. It wasn't one of their own. Almost half an hour later, they had to acknowledge the inevitable. It was an Earth Kingdom ship. The outer hull made of fired clay, the top deck and all between one big weapon only for the earthbending sailors aboard. To anyone else, setting foot upon it would be a death trap. And so the game would play out. The Earth Kingdom ship would raise their walls, simultaneous tools for attack and defence, and begin bombarding the Fire Nation ship. Each strike would do little to the overall integrity of their ship, but it would add up as the battle continued.

The Fire Nation vessel would launch ignited coal at the Earth Kingdom ship, who would then shatter it with sandstone shots, where it would then it fall into the ocean, dousing the flame. Then they would pull the rock out from the waters, still dripping wet, and send it right back at the Fire Nation, the coal only more ammunition for their war machine.

Maybe the Fire Nation ship would win, or maybe it would be the first to sink. Luck and skill tended to vary by the day. But whoever lost would either die or be in chains by nightfall. There was no nearby island to make for and gain reprieve.

The soldiers didn't try to keep Spyro from the fight. He was old enough that he could be considered a warrior, and he was a bender. But it was unlikely he would be of help in the coming fight—maybe just to light the coal without losing his head.

It took all of thirty seconds for that plan to go to pot. It started out normally, if somewhat tragically. A boulder flew at Spyro's head and he didn't get out of the way, his feet rooted to the deck. Then things got strange. Spyro punched the boulder, shattering it into shrapnel. Then he deftly plucked a single shard from the still-spreading cloud and stepped out of the danger zone. His hand went back and he returned the shard of earth at three times the speed it had been sent, right to his attacker's Adam's apple. The cloud of debris floated past him.

Then, before anyone could quite wrap their heads around what he had just done, he ran towards the edge of the deck and jumped, flames leaping from his feet. He landed on one of the boulders headed toward the Fire Nation ship and kicked off again, redirecting the projectile into the sea. And so he went, almost casually hopping across the distance to the Earth Kingdom ship. He'd have preferred another method, but he didn't have wings this loop, so he'd have to make do somehow.

As his feet touched down on the earthen ship, he sent out a pulse of mana and chi, connecting himself with the ground below him. The earthbenders didn't even react. Well, if they were too dense to figure out what he was doing, that was their fault, not his.

He advanced towards the first man, who immediately tried to encase his feet in stone. The man's technique and speed were deplorable; even without his connection to the ground, Spyro would have seen that coming a mile away. That was almost contemptuously sidestepped. His counter, a raging blast of flame, downed the man before he even recognized the attack. Don't strike at fire if you don't want to be burned.

The next one tried to punch him in the back of the head. A little footwork, a twist of the hip, and the man's own momentum was behind the force that introduced his face to the dirt.

As more came at him, Spyro decided to change it up. With so many earth targets before him, his instincts were almost screaming to use electricity. The only warning that the earthbenders got was the instant it took for Spyro to shift stances, his curled fingers becoming like claws. Then he was on his next victim.

Jab, jab, don't even watch as they jerk and spasm, unconscious. There is point A, there is point B; there is nothing in between. Spyro saw the last one across the deck, fearfully and futilely trying to pull up an earthen wall between them. Spyro jabbed once. A single bolt cleared the distance between them. A heartbeat later, the man crumpled as his half-formed wall slumped into a crumbled hill of stone.

Classic 31.9: (Feat: Demonicor)

One day, a kid dropped his four pet lizards into the sewer, where they came into contact with radioactive goo, forever changing their lives.

They were taken in by an aging raccoon named Sly, who named them and gave them a home, training them in the ways of his own mastery.

Toothless, Spike, Spyro, and Mushu. Together, they are the Teenage Mutant Rogue Dragons.

Legend 31.10:

It was yet another routine baseline run. Spyro had just rescued Volteer and was listening as the electric guardian went on his usual motor-mouth rant.

"... but it seems she was using me as some sort of suspended, organic power-source," Volteer said, quoting his usual dialogue word-for-word.

"Huh?" Despite being awake, Sparx was strangely adamant about sticking to baseline dialogue this loop, a rare feat for him.

Deciding to play along, Spyro looked over at him. "She was using him as a battery."

"Why didn't you just… Wait." Sparx paused, placing a hand to his chin as he glanced at Spyro. "Spyro?"

"Yeah, Sparx?"

"Considering our universe's tech isn't all that advanced, and we lived in a swamp for most of our lives…" Sparx raised an eyebrow. "How did you know what a battery was in baseline?"

Spyro blinked, opening his mouth to respond, only to stand in silent pause. Placing a claw to his chin, he thought about it for a few seconds before staring away from Sparx, a blank look on his face.

(A/N: Huzzah for more fillery shenanigans. Sorry this took so long. I realize there are some who only read this for the loop shenanigans, but it's been a bit hard getting this out in regards to how it's easier to write the mega-arc, mostly because of a reason I intend to address.

As of right now, I'm cutting the number of mini-arcs I'm writing in these chapters down to one. The main reason is because I'm starting to overwhelm myself with them to the point that I prefer writing the mega-arc to filler chapters. Rest assured, I do intend on finishing the arcs I started so far, but for now, I'm going to be tackling them one at a time, with 'What Makes a Hero' being the main one I'm dealing with for now.

Of course, there's nothing stopping other writers from writing their own mini-arcs, so there isn't going to be one ongoing mini-arc at a time.

Also, a question to my viewers; would you be okay with more crossover gags/loops for filler arcs? I've been trying to keep them down to a minimum to keep the focus on Spyro, but as this filler showed, I and several others have some pretty interesting snips involving these kinds of gags, so… leave a review stating your opinion on that.

Anyways, on to the loop names.

31.1: I'm beginning to wonder if I should have saved this for a future mega-arc. The battle going on there alone is making it last far longer than I intended…

31.2: If Spyro looped in with King Sombra… (and if my readers would actually be okay with that. I've gotten a lot of complaining about FiM presence in the earlier loops, hence why there hasn't been any in more recent chapters, but I can't help but get the feeling other loop writers think I hate the FiM loops because of it, which I don't. While there are some minor things about it that bug me, it's what got me into the loops in the first place, which is why they had such a big presence.)

31.3: We often hear about how utterly bizarre Ihy's loops can get, but we've never actually seen them firsthand so far. Figured I'd fix that.

31.4: I'm still not entirely sure myself, either.

31.5: While I prefer looping Ember to hyper fangirl baseline Ember, it's still fun to use the latter for gags like this.

31.6: Honestly, pirate dog things, giant scorpions and dragons are probably some of the more mundane things Little Mac has to box.

31.7: What do you expect from a kid who managed to crash *three safe-mode punishment loops?*

31.8: You know, I'm actually surprised it took this long for an Avatar loop to happen.

31.9: Heroes in a half scale; dragon power!

31.10: Fridge logic is fun to think about in hindsight.)

Student VS Mentor (!)

Fused loop 1.1 continued (Feat: AbZ, Ukelele, Toko) (Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

The air was thick in the sparring hall when the groups entered, loopers on one side and guardians on the other. Legend glanced over to see Terrador, Cyril and Volteer talking amongst themselves as Red sat a bit of a distance away from them. He took a deep breath, hoping that, if anyone, Red would be his opponent.

Legend steeled his nerves as he sat down, failing to keep his gaze off his mentors. If there was one thing his baseline had taught him, it was to be ready for anything, and that had only been reinforced by the loops tenfold. Legend had heard horror stories from other loopers about how they'd gone through loops that forced them to fight their friends and loved ones. He knew it would only be a matter of time before his luck forced him into a loop where he'd have to go claw-to-claw with one of his mentors, but that knowledge did little to quell the growing anxiety in his chest.

He had been expecting something along the lines of them being well-intentioned extremists in some way, their attempts to stop the war being almost as bad as Malefor's attempts to keep it going, or even them being under Malefor's control, like Cynder had been. He had never expected to have to fight them while they were close to their baseline personalities, even if it was just a simple sparring match.

If it wasn't for the fact that so much was riding on this, Legend likely wouldn't have been as nervous as he was. His only slight reprieve was that Ignitus wasn't there, so having to spar with him wasn't a possibility. As much as he wished he could have seen Ignitus this loop, he doubted he could have kept his focus if he'd been forced to fight him.

Legend took another deep breath, closing his eyes in a futile attempt to calm his nerves. A moment later, a wing draped over him. Legend looked to his side, seeing Cynder giving him a concerned look. Despite everything, he managed to smile and quickly nuzzled her.

"Thanks…" he muttered, pulling back as he felt his muscles finally start to relax.

Cynder gave him a soft smile, still keeping a wing draped over him. Although such a scene would normally have caused Classic to gag, he was too busy eying the competition and smirking to notice.

"Heh, this will be a cinch," he said, sitting down on the nearby bench and crossing his forelegs. "I fight Red every other baseline run. If I get him, it'll be over before they can blink."

Legend quickly glanced over to him, a stern expression on his face.

"Don't be too cocky, now. Be that as it may, keep in mind that this isn't baseline Red," Legend said, finally breaking out of Cynder's embrace to walk over to his loop brother. "We have no idea what other tricks this loop may have given him. Besides, you could end up fighting one of the other guardians instead."

"Eh, either way, I got this," Classic said, looking at Legend with a smug expression. "I have my own tricks in store, too. Besides, how do you expect a bunch of old geezers to keep up with me? You've seen how quick on my paws I am."

Legend let out a short growl, Classic's words striking a chord at the back of his mind. He opened his mouth, about to protest Classic's blatant disrespect, but was cut off when the sound of the dojo's door opening rang throughout the hall.

Legend turned, blinking at the sight of an elderly blue dragon walking in on two legs, using his staff as a walking stick. Classic and Ember looked on with confusion, while Legend and Cynder just stared blankly.

"Elder Tomas?" Ember asked, raising an eye-ridge.

"The heck is he doing here?" Classic said, tilting his head. "I can understand Red, but old man Tomas looks about as dangerous as a sheep."

The elder dragon stopped in the middle of the arena, looking towards the guardians, most of whom gave respectful bows in response, before looking over to the loopers with a smile on his face.

"I was informed of your rather large claim a few moments ago," Tomas said to the group in general, the kind expression still on his face. "I must say, it is hard to believe, but when you've lived as long as I have, you come to expect the unexpected."

Tomas turned to face the looper group, holding a paw to his chest. "In case any of you haven't met me in what you call your 'baselines,' I am Tomas. I am unsure what role I may have taken in your worlds, but here I am the head of the guardians, the one who makes sure that everything stays in order and oversees any and all training and sparring matches."

Legend blinked. From what he had seen when he had first arrived, he'd naturally assumed that Terrador was the current leader of the guardians. Maybe he was biased, but seeing someone who was so blatantly from Classic's world being in charge of them was something he found hard to take in. Nonetheless, he bowed respectfully.

"It is an honor to meet you," he said, straightening up again.

"What gives?" Classic blurted out, raising an eye-ridge at the elder. "No offense, but in my baseline you aren't exactly a fighter."

Tomas gave an amused smile as he saw Legend shoot Classic a sharp glare. Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes.

"As different as two sides of a coin, it would seem," Tomas said, giving a soft chuckle before looking back at Classic. "Appearances can be deceiving, young one. While my age may be catching up with me in recent years, back in the day I was one of the top guardians here." Tomas smirked, raising an eye-ridge at Classic. "How else do you think an old geezer like me could become the leader of some of the toughest dragons in the realms?"

"Sorry, but I'll believe that when I see it," Classic said, smirking as he crossed his forelegs. "If you really want to prove it, though, you can be my sparring opponent. Just don't be surprised when I win."

"Believe me, young one, if I was in my prime and you were my opponent, it would be a rather rude awakening," Tomas said, chuckling as he rested his paws on his staff. "Alas, I am old now. I will merely be overseeing the fights for the time being. Now then, we should probably get started."

Tomas began to pace back and forth as he eyed the loopers, occasionally taking a glance back at the guardians. He held an amused expression, walking with his staff like a cane.

"I have an eye for spotting little details, especially when it comes to combat strength," Tomas said, stopping in the middle of the arena. "As such, I will pick matchups that will give a challenge to the combatants involved…"

Tomas glanced between the two groups with an indifferent expression on his face. His gaze quickly keyed in on Legend, taking note of his solid stance, the stern expression on his face, and yet the slightest hint of worry in his eyes underneath it all. His stance spoke of a hardened warrior, yet there was the slightest hint of longing for something… He had seen that look on many a young Peace Keeper put in the lines long before they were ready.

Tomas' expression softened. He was unsure what Legend's 'baseline' may have been like, but it was clear from his subtle body language that it had been a long chain of hardships. Having to now

go up against those who were normally his mentors in his 'baseline'—at least, as far as Tomas understood—likely didn't make things easier.

Tomas glanced over to the guardians. He knew them far better than he knew the loopers, so picking an opponent for him wasn't too hard. Looking the group over, he noted one had taken an absence. Tomas huffed. *'Likely for the best, knowing that dragon...'*

Clearing his thoughts, Tomas went back to the matter at paw. He had heard a lot from what the loopers had told the guardians in baseline, with a major one being that some of them were Legend's mentors. He was unsure which ones were Legend's teachers in his 'baseline,' but he did know one thing for sure. Cyril and Volteer were skilled, but they were too often too full of themselves. The last thing the poor soul he saw in Legend needed was to hear his mentors berating him when they got the chance.

Red was in much the same boat, but even if he had not been, it would still be a bad match-up. Red's strength was magic, while Legend's strength, from what he had gathered, lay in physical attacks. Though Red was usually good at compensating for this, Tomas could tell that Legend was far more skilled in combat than the average thug the Peace Keepers needed to take care of. This left only one option…

Terrador, the guardian of Earth. Disciplined enough to keep from taunting his opponents, while still possessing the skill needed to end battles quickly. With Ignitus gone, bless his soul, Terrador was the next in line to take his place once Tomas finally stepped down. His posture, his manners… In a way, they reminded him much of what he saw from Legend at a glance. Tomas smiled, quickly turning to the two Spyros.

"Tell me, Spyros," Tomas said, an amused expression on his face, "how do you two prefer to be differentiated from each other?"

"Well, I'm usually called Spy," Classic said, looking up blankly.

"And I'm usually referred to as Ro," Legend finished.

"Well then, Ro," Tomas said, looking at the Spyro in question with a soft glance. "You will be the first one up, and your opponent shall be Terrador."

Upon hearing this, Terrador gave a nod, making his way to the middle of the arena. Tomas returned the nod before he made his way off the field.

Legend took a deep breath, steadying his nerves. He had prepared himself for this outcome, and yet the anxiety in his chest refused to quit. Cynder quickly draped a wing over him, prompting Legend to look at her. With a soft glance, Cynder gave him a nod and kissed him on the cheek. Legend nodded in return, replying with his own gentle kiss to her cheek, and then headed into the middle of the arena.

' *Inhale. Exhale. The elements began with the breath. Draw them in and let them become one with you. Let yourself out to mingle with existence. Know the world and let the world know you.'*

Legend and Terrador slightly inclined their heads in acknowledgement of the spar. Inhale. Exhale. Legend dug slightly into the ground beneath his paws and sent a small wave of mana into the surrounding earth. He kept his gaze locked on the bigger dragon. Closing his eyes to visualize the tremors *did* help, but it would do little if his opponent took to the air. Nor would it let him predict a breath attack. Still, it was good strong earth, if shallow. It pulsed with the residual mana of thousands of dragons who had connected with it before, and rang with Terrador's own mana.

But, Legend forcibly reminded himself, this was not the Terrador with which he was familiar. This was not his teacher. This was a master of the earth, one who just happened to share the same name as his teacher. But for that, it also meant that this Terrador had no idea what Legend was capable of. This would likely begin slow as they tested each other.

Terrador merely quirked an eye-ridge. Legend could guess why. It was likely unusual for any dragon in this world to use more than one element, and given his blood and the fact that he had spent so much time with Ignitus, his element most likely should have been fire. Given that Terrador had been so close to Ignitus, had Legend ever shown the briefest hint of an earth leaning, they likely would have been introduced. That Legend was not only able to use earth, but could even use it to determine his surroundings, was impressive for no formal instruction. Coupled with his body's young age, this only reinforced what they had told Terrador and Red earlier. Besides, to fight an earth master with earth surrounding them on all sides, and to not use his own earth element, would be foolish on a perfect day.

"So, fire and earth? Are there any more secrets that you have been keeping?" Terrador asked.

"I only claim to be a purple dragon, sir," Legend replied.

Terrador snorted, noticing that Legend had neither confirmed nor denied anything with that statement. Their separate mana flowed through the ground, each content for the moment to allow the other to move and observe unhindered. Inhale. Exhale.

It began with a slight ripple through the rock. The reply was swift and the end result was a pocket of earth popping from the ground, somewhere between them. Then began a back-and-forth through the earth that made up the floor, walls and ceiling—attacker and defender known only to the players. The pops began to slow as Terrador lowered himself and Legend began to sway.

They advanced slowly, circularly, until, at last, a claw struck out. In moments it had been rebuffed and a reply sent, only for that to be turned aside as well. And so the game went, its desire to draw the focus to only the melee—then, when the victim was well and truly districted, to strike out with an element. But Legend knew the game well, so when the strike came it was rebuffed. The trap evaded.

And the silent signal given. "Warm-up over. The real test begins *now* ."

The two dragons circled the center, fire and earth flowing like rivers about them. Within his own mind, Terrador allowed himself to admit the child was doing better than anticipated. While the things that Ihy knew about him were embarrassing and shouldn't have been known by a stranger, there *were* ways that he could have found out... Embarrassing stories told from friends and family to the right sweet-talker... But this dragon in front of him had far more skill with fire and earth than even most prodigies of a single element. It simply was not normal for a child to be this good. But still he was hesitant to allow any child, no matter how skilled, to walk into a battlefield. And if Ignitus ever found out that he had allowed one of his grandchildren to get injured or worse... That didn't bare even thinking about.

But there was something odd. The way this child moved...

Legend, for his part, was internally frowning. Terrador's style was familiar...but it was *off* somehow. There were certain things that his Terrador never did. Certain angles he never struck from. Sometimes they were angles that he had been specifically warned *never* to strike from. He had been given first-hand experience *why* one should never strike from those angles. Yet here this master was, breaking those rules. Were they traps? Were they openings Terrador thought he could get out of? There was really only one way to find out.

Terrador watched in shock as Legend ducked under his latest attack. That stance, that feeling! He'd never seen someone try to take that attack lane! Automatically, his own body responded. The last time he had even *heard* of someone trying that attack lane was...Ruthapuld, twenty-thousand years ago.

As Legend continued his attack, he felt something was wrong... There! A counterblow? His master had never shown him that! In desperation, Legend bailed from his attack and disengaged the larger dragon completely, watching the strike pass through right where his diaphragm would have been.

Terrador examined him for a moment, his own pupils returning to normal from the shock. "Your style is...archaic," he said finally. That was what had seemed so strange before, the way his opponent moved... No one in this day and age taught that.

"I still find it strange that vendors sell meats that they themselves did not hunt," Legend admitted.

'I'll bet you do,' Terrador mentally agreed. Though, did that information give him an advantage? As he'd seen, there were obviously certain techniques that Legend would probably be unaware of, but without being able to pinpoint the relevant time exactly, that was something of which he was unsure.

'Nothing for it, then,' Legend thought. *'Just earth and fire won't carry this. I told him I was a purple dragon, now it's time to show him what I meant!'*

Legend reengaged the earth dragon, all but charging him. Terrador stuck as he entered his range. A fire dragon would have curled around the hit; an earth dragon would have swatted it to the side. Instead, Legend jumped over the blow and thrust his claw down in counterattack.

'That was the choice made by—' Terrador's thoughts were confirmed as he saw the tiniest of sparks jump from Legend's talons.

Legend's strikes continued, now completely stepping away from Terrador's attacks, his blows becoming quick jabs punctuated with the slight crackle of electricity.

When Legend's moves changed again, Terrador was almost expecting it—but not what Legend did. He blocked Terrador's latest strike and...skimmed along his foreleg, advancing even further. Realizing what was coming next, Terrador had to back off to get the distance to put an earth wall between him and the sudden bombardment of frost.

'Fire, earth, electricity and ice. Ancestors, is there an element he's not *proficient with?'* Dismissing the earthen construct, Terrador returned to the fight.

Legend was moving differently again, Terrador duly noted. He was using all four elements now, swapping between them almost instinctively.

'This is it,' something inside him realized. *'This must be how he usually fights!'*

And again it was familiar. It was five blows later that he finally realized. He wasn't sure what had tipped him off, or if he finally had enough clues or time, but he had realized it. Ragnar... The way this dragon moved, it was like the Dragon Kata... No, like everything else, this was too old for it to be recognized as that... It was almost a proto-Kata, one that didn't use chi. This one instead made use of the elements—built from the four styles. Wasn't that a kick in the teeth?

But even realizing that wasn't much help when he was being pushed fully to the defensive. He needed *something* to end this fight and end it now!

A thought flitted through his head... It was a rather recent discovery. It was unlikely that it was well-known in the time that this style came from... He was pretty sure, anyway; he remembered hearing how chi was at least in usage by that time. So, Terrador pulled out the earth dragon's trump card.

Legend jerked as he felt something within the earth shift. There was a screeching sound of tearing from below, and Legend watched in astonishment as a sheet of metal sprang from the ground and reached for him. With a pulse of Dragon Time, Legend jumped back.

'What just happened?' He looked at where the metal sheet had come from and realized that it had been attached to girders and struts, which were responsible for the building's structural integrity. Of course they would use metal. That way, if two earth dragons sparred,

they weren't in danger of bringing the building down about their horns.

Still, earth dragons could move metal? Then he felt another tremor as more sheets erupted. *'What do I do? I don't know how he's moving the metal, so I can't wrestle it from him... But earth's opposite is electricity!'*

Talons again sparking, Legend dodged and slashed at the next sheet that came for him. There was resistance, then his claws went through. But Terrador's hold on the metal was still strong. The sheets were moving to surround him; he needed to do something! With little time to think, he curled in on himself and made an electric shell as the metal moved to surround him. In a moment, there was simply a hovering metal shell where Legend had been before.

Nothing seemed to happen for a second, then Volteer began to speak. "Cyril, would you terribly mind placing a large, cold obstruction between us and what shall be transpiring in the next, oh...half a second?"

Almost on cue, the metal was blasted backwards in a flash of yellow. Terrador, now unable to completely control the debris, had to swat the metal sheets that flew in his direction to the side as Legend's paws hit the ground, both lightly panting.

It was about then that Terrador remembered: this was a child. It was a child that he was fighting. He should never have used metal even to merely encase a child... And, in the end, it hadn't mattered. He had still found a way out. It was then that he realized there was truth to what had been said earlier. He likely *could not* stop this young dragon if it came to it... Not without killing. And that was not an option.

"I think I have seen enough," he said simply. Turning around, Terrador began heading back to the other guardians, raising his head up. "I forfeit. While I still don't condone the idea of a child

heading into a warzone, I cannot deny the dragon I faced is no ordinary child."

Legend looked on blankly as he watched Terrador head back to the others. Cyril gave his fellow guardian a smug look, receiving a stern glance in response. Tomas chuckled, walking back into the arena and glancing down at Legend.

"So, it would appear that there is some truth to your claim," Tomas said, smirking. "While use of magic to temporarily gain another element is not unheard of, what you displayed was far more natural than what I've seen from magic—and the use of multiple elements at once is not a feat that most magic-users can pull off."

Tomas chuckled, shaking his head. "Regardless, I'd still like to test the abilities of the others in your group. While you may have proven yourself far beyond a capable fighter, we still have yet to see the limits of your companions." Tomas raised his head, looking towards the group in question. "While you all have gained a lot of abilities through sheer repetition—if what I am understanding is correct—that is no substitute to learning through hard work and practice."

Tomas lowered his head, closing his eyes. "If there is one thing you all take away from this, I hope it is that."

"Now then, hurry over back to your friends," Tomas said, gently nudging Legend with his staff. "I have a bit of a cleanup to do after this battle."

Legend did so without protest, remaining silent as he continued to stare blankly at nothing. When he made it back to the group, Cynder was quick to greet him, looking him in the eyes, her face filled with concern.

"You alright?" she asked, tilting her head.

"Y-yeah," Legend stuttered, quickly forcing a smile. "J-just need a moment for the adrenaline to wear off, is all."

As Legend caught his breath, Tomas looked at the raised metal plating with an amused expression. With earth dragons beginning to grasp the basics of manipulating metal at increasingly earlier ages, it was only a matter of time before he would have to find a new way to reinforce the dojo. He chuckled at the thought, raising his staff in front of him. For now, he would just have to continue to act as clean-up.

Tomas took a deep breath, the gem at the tip of his staff beginning to glow. His eyes began to glow a deep blue before an aura surrounded the obstructions of torn metal plating. As it began to shift back into place, Tomas' nerves tightened, and then the metal slammed into the ground, glowing a bright blue. In a quick flash, it was once again perfectly fitting, as though it had never been torn up in the first place.

Another deep breath, another flash, and it was quickly covered by earth once more. Tomas stumbled, leaning on his staff once the deed was done. Taking a few more deep breaths, he regained his balanced and looked over to Terrador.

"If you don't mind, Terrador," he said between gasps. "If you end up in another match and feel like you need to use metal against your opponent, would you mind just ending the match there?" He stood up straight, quickly clearing his throat. "While I am able to repair any damages done to the dojo, I must stress once again that I am no spring chicken."

"My apologizes, Tomas," Terrador said, giving a respectful bow. "I promise not to use it again in any future matches."

"Thank you," Tomas said, giving a bow in return. Turning over towards the loopers, he smiled. "Now then… Wait, where is Spy?"

The loopers raised their heads, quickly looking for the missing purple dragon in question. A cleared throat was heard from across the room and Volteer stood forward.

"If I may speak... The young purple approached me during his twin's battle with Terrador," Volteer said, a sheepish smile on his face. "The poor youth asked me if he could step out for a moment to get some fresh air, his voice carrying a tone of slight discord to it. Considering he is to go up against some of the most well-trained dragons in the realm, it was understandable, and thus I found it hard to deny the young one's request."

Legend blinked, staring at blankly at Volteer. That sounded so unlike Classic, especially after the boasting he had been doing before the battle. Elder Tomas nodded, a soft smile on his face.

"Understandable indeed. A shame, though, as he was who I was going to pick next," Tomas said, shaking his head as he glanced towards the loopers. "I suppose, while he lets his nerves settle, we could have someone else participate in the meantime. That said, would anyone mind fetching him so he doesn't end up getting disqualified by default for not showing up?"

Legend was quick to step forward, giving a quick bow. "I'll go. He is my brother, after all."

"Very well, then. Probably best you do, not only for the fact that you just completed your match," Tomas said, a glint in his eyes as he gave a smirk.

Legend nodded, quickly heading towards the dojo's door. That wasn't the only reason he wanted to be the one to check on his loop brother. Something was up with him, something he hadn't quite been able to place since this loop had gone crazy on them, and he wanted to know what it was. After everything they'd been through, he felt like he deserved to know, one way or another.

As Legend exited the dojo, Tomas looked back at the group of loopers.

"Now then…" he said, placing a claw to his chin. "The next one to step up shall be…"

Classic sunned himself in one of the recesses of the great mud-brick fortress. About an hour ago, he had asked Volteer if he could step outside for a minute, saying that he needed to 'focus.' After he'd miraculously dodged an eternity of pleasantries with the walking yellow thesaurus, Classic had discovered a passage to an obscure alcove and finally had time to think, *alone* .

"Spy?" A head and horns sprang forth from the opening. "Are you alright?"

"Hm." It took a second for Legend's question to register and Classic finally snapped out of his personal reflections. "...Oh! S-sorry, just a little tired, is all." Classic sat up on the flat roofing and turned toward his brother. "How'd you know where I was?"

Legend pulled himself onto the baked clay and sat down. "I didn't, but a canary told me that you left."

Gritting his teeth, Classic tried to maintain a neutral expression. *'Remind me to duct-tape Volteer's pie-hole later...'*

"It's interesting that you decided against telling Volteer exactly where you were going. Is there something you'd like to say?"

Classic focused on the arid landscape before him, pretending not to hear Legend.

"Alright. I guess I'll just stay here until you talk."

A few moments passed and Classic decided that his brother didn't deserve the silent treatment. "How'd it go with Terrador?"

"He gave me a pass, so I was planning on gathering any supplies we might need." A thought crossed Legend's mind and he felt that he had a better idea of what was going on. "You're nervous, aren't you?"

"You're nosy, aren't you?"

"No, just observant."

A sigh escaped from Classic and he decided there was no point continuing to keep his guard up. "You remember what happened when I dragged you to the park, right?"

"I'd rather not."

"Yeah, but if I forget about it, it'll just happen again," Classic pointed out while narrowing his eyes. "I *thought* it was OK to act like an asshole while I fight because I've never had to deal with the consequences. I *thought* I could get away with making it up as I go along because it definitely worked for a while."

Classic closed his eyes. "Then, I crossed the line. I tried to kill you."

Legend's heart plummeted into his gut and, almost instinctively, he—

"Don't tell me that it wasn't my fault, that you pushed me to that point. There's no excuse for killing in a situation like that."

Sensing that Classic was venting, Legend let him continue.

"Did I ever tell you about the Sorceress and the dragon eggs?" There was no answer, so Classic lowered his voice. "You want to know why I killed her?"

Classic reopened his eyes and stared down his brother. "The Sorceress kidnapped an entire generation of dragons so she could harvest their wings. She wanted to live forever and those wings were supposed to be part of a spell that would make it possible."

It took all of Legend's will to keep his fury in check.

The expression on Classic's face softened as he focused on the floor. "When she fell into boiling lava, I couldn't bear to look myself in the mirror the next few days. Sure, she was vain and ruthless, but she had to be more than just evil incarnate, and I wondered what

could have been if I had only been able to talk to her and understand what made her that way."

But Classic's reprieve was short-lived and indignation caused him to bare his teeth as he spoke. "But that old hag didn't know when to quit. She survived, gathered up the last of her magic, and ambushed me while I was searching for the last dragon egg."

"Want to guess where I found it?" Classic's downward glare grew as intense as the desert sun.

Remaining silent, Legend braced for whatever his brother would say next.

"On the end of her magic scepter. I dumped that bitch into acid and watched her dissolve, molecule by fucking molecule."

Finally, Classic shifted his gaze toward the mirages and heat waves that lined the horizon. "Ro, that's what pushes me to kill. Not some catfight over who the real Spyro is. What I did at the park is unforgivable, but I'll always be thankful that you haven't held it against me."

Taken aback, Legend attempted to process what had just transpired. He'd always assumed that Classic had it easy in his loops, but to hear him speak like that... It was surreal.

"We agreed that we wouldn't let anything like that happen again, didn't we?"

"Of course," Legend immediately replied.

"So, do you see the problem now?"

It was here that Legend fully understood his brother's dilemma. "Your combat style encourages behavior similar to what you showed during our fight. You'd like to change it for the better, but you have no time to retrain yourself."

Nodding, Classic continued his explanation. "I still want the freedom to be flexible when I fight, but I need some sort of structure to rein me in before I go too far."

Here, Legend could relate. A good while after his fight with Classic, he had grown to admire the vast creativity his brother expressed in battle. Now that he had the time to think about it, he realized that, on their way to Peace Keepers, Classic had made no attempt to improvise with his abilities. He only used basic elements, plain magic, and a few of the orbs in his subspace pocket. Sure, he'd hacked a golem and cobbled together a massive shield at the library, but that paled in comparison to what Legend knew his brother was capable of.

Then, it struck him: Classic had accepted a support role because he was afraid that his usual combat style would endanger the whole group. Sure, this was acceptable at Lorefang, but when they reached Magic Crafters and confronted Malefor, it wouldn't be enough. If this loop's Malefor was drastically different from his baseline, everyone would have to fight at peak performance, and Classic performed best when he improvised. It would be disastrous if Classic avoided using unconventional methods, and Legend knew for a fact that having a structured combat style did not require the sacrifice of creativity.

"You know, it's true that having structure can push you into a rut," Legend said. "I'll admit that I'm letting this happen to me more often as the loops go on. However, structure isn't a series of steps that you must follow to win a fight. It's a set of principles that you impose on yourself in order to become more effective."

This information struck Classic with a moment of clarity and, just to make sure he wasn't just being crazy, he asked, "So you're saying that I could come up with a structure that encourages experimenting and doesn't require a lot of retraining?"

"...Well, it depends on what you have in mind," Legend said slowly. "As long as your principles lead you to respect your opponents, while increasing your effectiveness, it's possible to integrate structure into

your current combat style by making some tweaks. Still, I'd have to see it in action if I'm going to make any judgments."

Classic's claw rested on his chin. He figured that he would need some sort of visual aid to organize his ideas. Out of his subspace pocket, Classic pulled out a deck of playing cards and a pile of gems.

"What's this? Your spar is coming up soon and you want to play cards?"

After distributing the gems equally and placing the deck between him and his brother, Classic simply smirked. "I'm not playing, I'm gambling."

Holding a ruby in his claw, Classic explained. "This is stamina, how long I can keep fighting."

Next, he took the deck and dealt five cards each. "These are my tactics; they're face-down because I haven't shown them to you yet."

"To start the match, we have to provide stamina to bet." Classic shoved one gem to the center and Legend, quick to understand, followed suit.

"Then, we use our stamina to put our tactics in action." Flipping over one of his cards, he displayed its number and suit. "When I use a tactic, it's exposed to you and you have the opportunity to understand it and undermine it."

Then Classic flipped his card back, hiding the marked front. "When I stop using a tactic, you lose that opportunity."

Turning another card over, he added another gem to the lot. "Some tactics require more stamina to maintain, but they have the advantage of being harder to understand and less exploitable."

Legend pulled the exposed card to his side and picked up where Classic had left off. "When a tactic fails, as a result of your own failure or the opponent's success, stamina is wasted."

Classic pushed a couple of gems off to the side, to show that they had been spent.

"Now, here's where it gets interesting," he added. "There are multiple ways to win, since stamina is wasted the longer you use a tactic, and you lose it even faster by taking damage. So, one strategy that could work is to let the opponent find his favorite tactics."

He flipped over one of Legend's cards, a king. "Then, you grant him limited success by taking a few hits." He sent only one of his gems to the discarded pile. "By having the opponent achieve some success, you encourage him to bet more stamina on his most successful tactics."

Legend pushed more gems next to his cards, on Classic's cue. "These tactics would be used more often, increasing their exposure, making them easier to exploit or at least avoid. Plus, the payoff gets bigger, since the opponent is betting more of his stamina."

As Legend placed the rest of his gems into the lot, Classic dropped a few more gems into the discarded pile. "The catch is that you have to carefully manage the damage your opponent is dealing."

Finally, Classic gathered all the gems that Legend had wagered and placed them with the other discarded crystals. "When the opponent has no stamina left to bet, you've won the match."

Legend looked up from his cards and smiled. "It's not foolproof, and I see a few flaws in it, but overall it's a sound plan. You may want to think of other ways to win, though."

"Don't worry," Classic reassured. "I have more than a few ideas."

There was a strong air of confidence between the Spyros, and Classic decided that he was ready to stop hiding on the roof. "So, when does uncle Red want to get his tail kicked?"

"He actually sent me over here to get you." An amused glint found itself in Legend's eyes. "Said something about canceling the spar if you kept him waiting."

Classic jolted from the ground and hurried back to the roof access. "You jerk!" In mock outrage he added, "Whose side are you on, anyway?!"

As Classic disappeared down the narrow corridor, Legend couldn't ignore the stark contrast between him and his counterpart. *'So it startles me when I find out that we're more similar than we thought...'*

Unbelievable.

To Red, this was a chance to be the competent uncle he should have been—at least, it was supposed to be. For a while, Red hadn't concerned himself with maintaining relations with his extended family. Ever since Ignitus had passed away, constantly occupying himself with his career and personal projects had become an increasingly attractive option. It was a healthy distraction, he told himself. And, despite Flash's numerous pleas over the phone to take it easy for once, he just could not let go. It wasn't until his nephews had arrived that he'd fully understood the consequences of his actions.

Truly, it broke Red's heart that his own brother never bothered to mention him to the kids, but that paled in comparison to what the twins were hiding from them—and what they may have been hiding for *years* . Legend had astounded Terrador with a reinterpretation of archaic combat styles, so Red had no idea what kind of tricks the other purple dragon had to offer. What he was sure of was that Classic most likely had a variety of elements to use, like his brother. What those elements were was up in the air. On top of this, Red

figured that someone must have been piloting the transit car the group had arrived in, so knowledge of the magic command line was also a possibility.

"Red..."

Red's greatest concern wasn't Classic's skill set, though it was a close second. Rather, it was his nephew's attitude in general. Put crudely, Classic was a smartass. Challenging his elders to prove their authority was a great show of disrespect, and Red feared what would have happened if Ignitus had heard that from his grandson. Worse, this attitude would prove disastrous on the battlefield when he had to cooperate with his allies. Unless Classic could prove that he had some form of self-control, Red could not let his nephew leave in good conscience.

"...Red?"

Scratch that, unless Classic had the decency to show up, Red would have no qualms assigning his nephew the glorious duty of scrubbing every toilet in the facility.

"Red!"

He was yanked out of his internal monologue and looked down to see Hunter with his body halfway buried under the earth. It didn't help that the cheetah was restricted by Red's telekinetic grip.

"Tomas called off the match, so..."

"Oh!" A forced smile appeared on Red's maw. "Terribly sorry, just wait a second."

With a heavy tug upward, Hunter was removed from his predicament and set down some distance from the newly-made ditch. Hoping that he hadn't made a bad impression, Red glanced back at Tomas.

The blue dragon elder looked on with a sceptical raised eye-ridge.

'Well, that certainly got his attention. With any luck, he may regard this as a harmless lapse,' thought Red as he looked down with a flat expression. Then, in his peripheral vision, he saw two whelps walk in through the sparring hall's entrance.

Red's challenger strode in with confident swagger, while his brother stopped to stare at the small yet deep crater in the middle of the arena. Before long, it was filled, thanks to some magic from Tomas, and Legend's regard was now directed at Classic vaulting over the arena's barrier.

As Classic neared the center of the ring, Hunter passed by and, without warning, punched him in the shoulder. "Not cool, man!" he audibly whispered.

"Hey! What the heck is your problem?" Classic hissed back.

"My problem? Red's pissed cause you left him hanging. While your twin was playing hide-and-seek with ya, Red thought you just bailed. And guess who he took it out on?"

Classic shifted his focus from the cheetah to the disgruntled elder he called 'uncle' this loop. With that confirmed, he attempted to placate his best friend. "Look, I had to...deal with some issues, okay? I know I screwed up, but I wouldn't screw you over on purpose. I'm sorry for whatever he did to you."

Hunter let a sigh escape and, with it, his frustration. "He didn't curb-stomp me, but he didn't give me much of a chance, either. I probably wouldn't have won anyway, so I guess its alright. Still, you're up next, and let me tell you, Red ain't a pushover this loop. Just try not to get on his bad side and things will probably be alright."

At this, the cheetah left Classic to size up his opponent and he soon realized that Hunter wasn't kidding. Red stood tall without the aid of a staff and it seemed that age hadn't caught up with him just yet, as his eyes didn't have that geriatric cloudiness. Rather, they were acute and blazed like hot coals.

Still, Classic maintained his confidence, remembering that Red had shared a lot with him and that his time with Elora had given him a better understanding of how magic ticked. If Red was going to give him a hard time, he could give just as much in return.

"So," Classic gingerly prodded. "Am I late?"

'The nerve of this boy!' "Technically, no. You weren't assigned an opponent yet, though your recent disappearance displays your severe lack of tact." Red's last word was tinged slightly with acid.

Turning toward Tomas, he said, "Permission to spar against Spy, Master Tomas?"

Oh, Ancestors... This was a loaded question. Under normal circumstances, Red sparring against a student in this state of emotions was just asking for trouble. It was clear that he had not fully vented during his spar with Hunter, and the apparent subject of his frustrations was offering him a thinly veiled challenge, whether it was intentional or not. Despite this, Tomas could sense an impressive stockpile of mana in Classic and it was clear from his loose stance and shrewd behavior that he was an avid user of magic. Logically, the best challenge for him would be the only Magic Crafter in the hall.

Aside from this, Tomas could draw a variety of similarities between Ignitus's son and grandson. For one, they both had difficulties with authority. Red may have quelled his rebellious tendencies as he grew older and wiser, but it was clear to everyone that this was not his natural state, from his insouciant interactions with some elders and his muttered quips when he thought no one was listening. It was one reason why Red had been labeled 'temporary' in the first place, in order to pacify the complaints of concerned elders and Red's initial protests against the entire arrangement.

Classic, on the other hand, didn't even try to hide his anti-authoritative mentality. That much was clear when he issued his challenge against the elders.

However, there was more to both dragons than simple rebellion. While neither would openly admit it, they had the same motivation for their respective personalities: the fear of losing self. Both uncle and nephew had more or less a strong outline of their identities: personal standards and ideas that they believed were the building blocks that made Red, Red, and Classic, Classic. When authority inevitably requested that they limit or outright change the behavior that resulted from their identities, it would be received as an attack and they would develop a form of resistance in order to preserve themselves.

Worse yet, if they, of their own volition or by accident, acted against their personal standards, it would be considered a form of suicide. This mindset led to proud individuals who, while they resented authority, held themselves to standards that they themselves could not always reach.

However, neither Classic nor Red took into account the possibility of confronting themselves physically. It was an absurd thought, but if they squared off in the ring, there was a good chance that they would be able to grasp the fact that their identities were not as fragile as they feared.

And so, Tomas allowed the spar to begin.

"Permission granted." Though, as he spoke, he gave both Classic and Red a warning glance, hoping that they understood what he conveyed.

Both dragons acknowledged Tomas's nonverbal advisory and angled their stances toward each other, remaining on opposite sides of the arena.

To appease the head guardian, Red tried to kick into his educator persona. "Now then, I understand that you see me as an obstacle to overcome. While that's partly true, you would be better off seeing this match as experiential learning, rather than a contest," he advised, his stance ready for any incoming blows.

"I wish we had the time for that," countered Classic. "But we need to get this over with. We have the Dragon Realms to save."

A puff of smoke came from Red. "I appreciate your determination, but it's my intention to study you during our match."

"The rules say that, to win, I have to knock you down for three seconds. Honestly, I don't appreciate being treated like some science project."

"As your uncle, I make the final decision on whether you leave or not." For a moment, Red's tone lost its humor. "I must analyze your behavior to the exact degree and if you refuse to let me do my job, you will face the consequences."

The bravado in Classic's demeanor faltered at that moment. *'He's not even a villain this loop, but he's already a lot more intense than usual. Is this what he was like before the Sorcerer used him as a pawn?'*

Recollecting himself, Classic made his decision. If Red didn't want to play dice, he would have to give him a reason to.

Red watched Classic begin to furrow his brows, and kept his teleport spell ready. The purple dragon tentatively stepped forward...then veered off and charged in the opposite direction. Was this some sort of joke?

A bright flash answered Red's question and he warped backwards to avoid a flying head-butt from behind. Upon reappearance, Classic stole a glance to measure his opponent's reaction: mostly exasperation, a small bit of disappointment, but that would change soon enough.

Without missing a beat, he disappeared in another pulse of polygons, prompting Red to respond in kind. What followed was no less than an abuse of instant travel. Only in the briefest moments did

they remain stationary, and it would always be the result of a deadlock between their chi-laced strikes.

'He makes liberal use of chi to match my strength.' The violet blur struck Red's raised wing, disappearing to repeat his assault. *'Yet he makes no effort to overpower me. Is he simply toying with me or is this a part of his tactics?'*

Then, after another series of exchanges, the realization struck him: he knew exactly what his nephew was attempting. *'But that's impossible! I've never taught my personal combat style to anyone; it's still in development! For him to experiment with these strategies, at the same age that I started... It couldn't be some sort of coincidence, could it?'*

There was only one way to find out. Pooling a reservoir of energy between his wings, Red continued to dart around the arena with his opponent.

As soon as Red stopped returning his blows, Classic knew something was up. Telekinesis was already on stand-by and it had proven useful for defence before, but it remained to be seen whether it would work as well without a material to absorb the impact...

Until now. Twin blades of concentrated chi were jettisoned from Red's wings, and Classic summoned as much force as he could muster, bracing for impact.

The blades dissipated and Classic dug all four claws into the earth to stop skidding backwards. Finally, the sheer momentum forced his front paws to lose grip and, by the end of his recovery, he found himself in a two-legged stance. Normally he would have been pleased to find that bipedal motion was becoming more natural to him, but his attention was occupied elsewhere.

Before him, suspended in the air, was a large disembodied paw composed entirely of what used to be Red's chi. As Classic willed

the paw to his side and attempted to flex it, his uncle watched with a satisfied smirk.

'Of course he discovered the Chi Gauntlet the same way I did. Should I expect any less?' Pride swelled in Red's chest, but he quickly reminded himself that he hadn't finished his job yet.

After learning how to maneuver his new limb, Classic returned his attention to the elder, who looked on expectantly. As to not to keep his uncle waiting, Classic pulled the ethereal gauntlet back and made a beckoning gesture with his outstretched claw.

Red refused to be outdone and cast his lot to answer Classic's challenge. "It's funny," he remarked as chi gathered around his forearm. "You remind me of myself..." Swinging his arm to his side, Red let his own Chi Gauntlet take form. "...When I was your age."

On one paw, Classic was relieved that he was finally gaining some recognition from the elder. On the other paw, his perceived advantage was now bogus, since Red already knew about the Chi Gauntlet. *'Might as well try not to ruin his good mood, then. Maybe if I quit stalling and tried a full-fledged attack, Red would quit holding out on me.'*

As uncle and nephew waited for the next move, a silent agreement flitted between their gazes: no more teleporting, for now. Once this was established, Classic dropped on all fours again and attempted to close the gap between him and the elder, holding his telekinetic chi-paw out in front of him as if he were a pint-sized quarterback.

This did not end in Classic's favor, as Red swept him up into the air with a small tornado he magically summoned. While the cyclone spell hurled him into the air, Classic came to the conclusion that Red's recent wager deserved a fitting answer. As he spun in midair, a multitude of bubbles sprang forth from Classic's maw, all containing frozen crystals within their soapy confines.

Red looked upward as his nephew stopped his flight with outstretched wings, and leapt into the air when Classic's Chi Gauntlet snatched a pawful of floating spheres and flung them down towards the elder. Alas, even as he escaped the incoming ice bubbles, stray bubbles nearer to the ceiling managed to clip his wings and, suddenly, Red felt a good deal heavier.

Doing his best not to crack a sardonic grin, Classic set forth to finish the job with the ice mines he telekinetically collected. With Red's wings frozen over, the only way Red could escape was through teleportation, and that was out of the question if he kept his end of the agreement.

And keep it Red did. Classic had an honorable uncle, so when all his ice bubbles were evaporated by fire-laced cyclone spells, there was no way the purple dragon could cry foul. After breathing fire into the little whirlwinds, Red took the opportunity to make another attack, blasting toward his nephew in a massive Comet Dash.

'Seriously?! Does everyone and their mother this loop know how to do that?!' Classic panicked as he furiously threw himself to the wall to evade the flame-coated bomb that catapulted toward him.

Red came to a stop and regarded his nephew, who held on to the metal support beams, ready to take off at a moment's notice. "How crafty of you to try and freeze me in midair, and with ice mines no less. Of course, what else should I have expected from my own nephew?"

Classic couldn't hold it in much longer and decided that this wasn't a bad time to gloat. "Heh, you haven't seen anything yet."

"Hm, really now?" Red said with a sarcastic inflection. "I suggest you start showing me the best you can offer because, from here on, class is over."

Upon his last words, his form and his chi-forged weapon fizzled into nothingness, leaving Classic at a loss as to what just happened.

Until an invisible force clocked him under the chin. It was at this point that Classic considered teleportation to be, once again, fair game. He flitted about the arena, attempting to avoid his unseen opponent. As to be expected, he couldn't successfully dodge all of Red's strikes, and a nasty wallop to the gut practically deflated Classic and sent him into a nosedive that ended in a smoking wreck on the ground.

"If you really claim to have experienced the same sequence of events thousands of times, you wouldn't have given me the chance to do that."

Recovering his breath, Classic slowly rose back into the air and responded. "It isn't always the same, you know." As he spoke, he let his sight be augmented by the wispy goggles that functioned as his focal points. "Sometimes, the loops throw you curveballs."

Now that he could detect mana traces, Classic could see a bluish outline of an adult dragon perched on the grooves that lined the ceiling, laying in wait. "When that happens, well..." He aimed his banish spell and collected on his uncle's ill-placed bet by disabling Red's invisibility temporarily.

Upon being exposed, Red's eyes widened in shock. A child like Classic should have no knowledge of this spell-cancellation method. Before he could teleport away, Red was literally shocked by the lightning spell that followed, and, without pause, he was transferred to the current that flowed in Classic's electric breath and thrown to the ground.

"...you just deal with it," Classic finished, taking the opportunity to pull down the vaporous lens like a pair of sunglasses.

Just as Classic landed, Red snapped back to his senses and rolled backward to create some distance between him and his nephew. Finally, he flipped into a ready stance and looked down on his opponent with a concerned expression. "Who taught you this spell, Spy?"

"You did, though I learned it on my very first loop," was Classic's simple reply as he re-cloaked his mana goggles.

Looking back toward Tomas, Red didn't even have to ask if Classic was to be evaluated on his use of this restricted spell. The blue-scaled elder held a solemn expression as he signaled for the spar to continue, and Red turned back toward his nephew, regretting what he was obligated to do next. "Fine then, let's see if you know how to use it."

However, Classic didn't catch the last bit of his uncle's sentence as he was blasted with a fireball at point-blank range. His scales absorbed much of the heat, but it still stung. He shut his eyes and gritted his teeth until the pain went away, and it was only when he reopened them that Classic discovered the disaster that had struck his magic command line.

Text spewed all over the command shell and, as a result, Classic's sight was soon taken over by nonsensical letters, numbers and symbols. Trying to activate his teleport spell, he found to his horror that none of his commands were getting through. Worse yet, he was being battered from all sides as Red phased in and out, wearing his nephew down with each hit.

"The banish spell is one of the ultimate weapons against those who abuse magic," the elder explained between his strikes. "It's expected that the opponents you use it on threaten their own safety and others."

Classic tried squinting between the dense lines of text to detect the incoming onslaught. Nothing. *'Damn, invisible again.'*

Another uppercut flung him into a bipedal stagger and Red continued his offensive. "These opponents will most certainly play against the rules and use your own strengths against you, like I just did."

Thankfully, the attacks ceased and Classic finally had a chance to lick his wounds.

"Are you ready to defend the Dragon Realms?" Red asked.

"...Huff ...Huff ...Yes..."

"I'm sorry," Red said as his knuckles cracked against the challenger's snout. "I didn't hear that."

Classic had had *enough* . Fighting through his pained daze, he tried to remember what Elora had taught him this loop when one of his enchantments had started to loop infinitely and barred his commands from registering. If he had any luck, it would work here as well.

"I will ask again..." warned Red.

The mana that circulated around Classic's eyes dispersed and, within moments, the focus points that impaired his vision were fully blocked. Finally, instead of text, he could clearly see his surroundings.

"Are you ready..." One hit.

Doing his best to ignore the pain, Classic let magic gather around his forearm and, before the next hit could come, another focus point was created on his wrist.

"...to defend..." Two hits.

With his ability to cast spells restored, all that was left was to find Red and let him have it. Using his mana goggles was out of the question now, but invisibility didn't mean intangibility, if Red's vicious blows were to be taken into account. If the elder was drenched, it wouldn't matter how well he was camouflaged or where he teleported: the water would follow after him.

"...the Dragon Realms?" Three hits.

Even after Red's unseen fist landed, Classic managed to stand tall. He breathed deeply and, as he let chi and the water element

overwhelm his body, answered loud and clear. "I'm ready!"

A mighty roar sounded forth from the purple dragon and a radius blast of water accompanied it. Red attempted to teleport out of the way to no avail. When the elder's shape glistened in the light, Classic knew exactly where to aim next.

Red was pummeled by a relentless jet of water and, after his invisibility as well as his gauntlet were nullified, he realized that his own technique of lacing elements with spells had been stolen. More impressively, Classic had unintentionally discovered a method of disabling the elder's spell-casting indefinitely, as the banish spell continued to take effect in the water that swamped his opponent.

As the earth grew saturated with liquid, Red knew that he wouldn't be able to anchor himself against the rushing current of his nephew's onslaught. So, to end the match, the elder crouched down and shot forward in a sliding kick. The softened dirt increased Red's speed and, before Classic could dodge, the sweep connected and the purple dragon's aqueous assault was cut short as he was tossed into the air.

There was no grunt of pain or sound of impact with the earth below, much to Red's genuine surprise. Instead, a flash of polygons appeared in the air above and Classic swiftly descended, his Chi Gauntlet forming at an alarming pace.

The elder had no time to evade as the purple dragon closed in, so he attempted to curl his wings in defense...

Only to have the wind expelled from his lungs.

After laying helpless for a sizable window of time, Red staggered onto all fours to inhale more easily, while his nephew slid off his body, landing in a crumpled heap off to the side. Soon enough, both dragons regained their ability to speak and Classic slowly lifted his head toward his uncle.

"I'm ready, Red," he insisted in spite of his heavy breathing.

Unable to argue against this, Red let a weak chuckle bring relief to the trial that had just ended. "It's uncle Red to you. And yes, Spy, you're ready."

Using whatever strength he had left, Red slowly made his way back towards the other guardians, no longer possessing the strength to walk on two legs. Glancing over to Tomas, he smirked.

"I forfeit," Red said, shaking his head. "I'm still not sure how much I believe this looping story, but it's clear that my nephew has become quite the capable magician and I am more than confident he can handle himself in battle."

Classic listened to Red's words as he picked himself up, watching on with a blank expression. No sooner had Red spoken did a smile appear on Classic's face. He was not entirely sure why—especially considering he rarely ever gave a crap about what the guardians thought—but, for some reason, hearing Red say that felt like his energy had been renewed. A sense of pride welled up inside him and he confidently headed back to the other loopers with his head held high.

Tomas chuckled at the sight, making his way back into the middle of the arena. He observed it briefly, not noting any immediate damage that needed to be repaired, and so went back towards the group of loopers. Scanning those who were left, his eyes landed upon Ihy. The admin gave Tomas a flat look before raising a paw.

"Pass," he said, looking back down at his laptop.

The other loopers jolted, giving Ihy odd glances as he tapped away at his keyboard. Glancing over at Legend, Ihy raised an eye-ridge before giving a scowl.

"Trust me. I'd like to be out there helping you guys as much as possible," Ihy said, before crossing his arms, "but mister I-have-no-

life-ninety-seven blocked my deity powers when he hijacked this loop. Without them backing me up, I'm not all that useful in combat. For the most part, I'd be dead weight." He looked back down at his laptop with a frown. "The most I can do is serve as mission control at this point, until I get them back. I'll do my best to help as much as I can from the sidelines."

Ihy sighed, shaking his head. "I wish there was more I could do, believe me. This is a mess I should be cleaning up on my own, not relying on you guys to do it for me."

A silence fell over the group as they glanced at Ihy, who kept his gaze down at his laptop. Legend frowned at him, though his eyes held an almost sympathetic look to them. He wasn't entirely sure what to make of Ihy anymore, but knew that he was having as much of a hard time as they were, maybe even worse. He couldn't even begin to imagine what it would be like to have your powers sealed while something like this was going on—something he could have easily stopped had he still had those powers, no less…

Tomas nodded before looking at the group at large. "I suppose while we're on the subject, is there anyone else who feels like staying behind now?"

The elder was met with silence. But, before long, Legend Sparx hovered forward, raising his hand.

"Question," he said, crossing his arms. "Can I get a pass on fighting one of the dragons that is, like, twenty times my size?" He scratched the back of his head. "I've followed my bro into worse situations, so that has to count for something…right?"

"Sorry, but the rules still stand," Tomas said, shaking his head. "Either you get a guardian's blessing or you have to stay behind. Your choice."

"Oh sure, pick on the dragonfly that doesn't have any super mystical abilities," muttered Legend Sparx, crossing his arms. Turning

around, he shook his head before looking to Legend. "Sorry, bro… Looks like I don't have much of a choice but to sit this one out."

Legend looked at Sparx with an amused expression, noting that it likely meant the dragonfly was going to sneak away and follow those who passed the test regardless. Either way, it was a fact he would have prepared for if it turned out to be the case.

"My Sparx is soul-bonded to me," Classic spoke up, his Sparx landing on his head. "He can absorb any damage I take should I want him to, and he can't die because of it. Does that mean he gets a pass?"

Tomas smirked. He could sense that the dragonfly and Classic had some sort of magical bond, and was almost certain Red had sensed it too. Shaking his head, he smiled. "Sure. If he isn't in danger of dying, and is there to help you, I see no problem with him accompanying you."

Classic Sparx smirked before sticking his tongue out at Legend Sparx. Legend Sparx looked away with a scowl, getting a chuckle from some of the dragons present. Then Tomas cleared his throat, regaining everyone's attention once again.

"Now then, with that settled, it's time to get back to business," Tomas said, looking at the group of loopers who had yet to participate.

Tomas glanced over the group with a contemplating glance. With those who'd already participated, and those who'd forfeited, this left three loopers. Cynder, Ember and Flame.

Of the three, his eyes were drawn to Cynder. She held an expression of indifference as she glanced around the room, a look that only dared soften when her gaze came upon Legend or Ember. There was something about this dragoness he could tell she was hiding, but that was besides the point. He was supposed to assess their combat abilities, not pry into personal issues. It was her choice if she wanted to share them or not.

Just a glance at Cynder's body-type told him she was swift on her paws, yet the stern look on her face also showed she was well-trained and knew how to strike powerfully and effectively. A fierce foe indeed.

Glancing back at the two guardians who had yet to participate, Tomas found that his decision was an easy one. While well-trained, Cyril was not one to think on his claws, nor was he all that fast. He chose to observe and react, not adapt on the fly. Volteer was the exact opposite, though perhaps it came with being an electric dragon. While old, electric dragon style meant he would still be fast and his element could strike without warning.

Tomas nodded before glancing back at the loopers. "The next match shall be: Cynder verses Volteer."

Cynder gave a small nod, getting up and heading into the arena with an expression of indifference. Pausing, she glanced back at the loopers to see Legend with a concerned look on his face. She flashed a reassuring smile before looking back into the arena.

Cynder had never been particularly close to the guardians in baseline. Only Ignitus had she ever been remotely close to, and, even then, that was mostly through Spyro. As such, she didn't find herself too intimidated when she faced down the electric elder, taking a stance and getting ready to move at a moment's notice.

She wasn't entirely sure what she was about to face in regards to Volteer, other than the fact that electricity as an element was fast and unpredictable. Spyro hardly ever used the element for anything other than crowd control, using it stun or send opponents flying so he could focus on a bigger problem. Electricity, rather ironically, wasn't actually all that powerful from what she had seen, but could prove to be a problem to someone who relied on quick strikes and movements to deal damage to their enemies. That was probably why Tomas had picked Volteer to face her.

Cynder smirked. She had to hand it to Tomas. He certainly was a good judge of character, but that also left a nagging worry in the back of her mind. Shaking her head, she focused her attention on Volteer. Now was not the time to worry about things like that.

"I must say," Volteer said, raising a claw to his chest as he held an amused smile. "This tale of repeated temporal displacement and adjusted universal replacement and recreation is most intriguing. If this particularly hard-to-believe fable does prove to have a grain of truth to it, I would quite like to be informed about some of your exploits and how one may go about being added to the repeated quantum leap you are all in."

Cynder held an amused smile. Even in an altered timeline, Volteer was his usual motor-mouth self.

"Trust me," Cynder said, shaking her head. "It's not as glamorous as it sounds."

Pushing those thoughts aside, she knew that giving Volteer the chance to strike first with a lightning attack wouldn't be wise, and started the battle by quickly ducking into her shadow, charging forward towards the surprised guardian. With quick paws, Cynder wrapped around to his side before diving out and using the momentum to take a quick swipe with her tail. The cut was swift, leaving a gash that almost immediately drew blood, and Volteer yelled out in both pain and surprise.

Despite the successful blow, Cynder flinched at hearing Volteer yelp in pain. In her moment of hesitation, Volteer was quick to respond with a tail-whip, sending Cynder barreling back. She managed to dig her claws into the ground, regaining balance as the electric guardian turned to look at her.

"Do not hesitate in this battle, young one," Volteer said, an almost uppity look about him. "While I can understand a mental blockage of not wanting to harm an innocent, this battle is to determine whether or not you are fit to go out into the field of battle. I can assure you, I

have taken far worse wounds than what you have just inflicted, so by no means should you hold yourself back."

Cynder blinked, then shook her head. Glancing over towards the other loopers, she saw Legend looking on with wide eyes, frowning. Despite this, when he saw the conflicted look on Cynder's face, he gave a nod. In return, after a moment's pause, Cynder nodded too. Looking back at Volteer, she hunkered down into attack position. Volteer looked down at her with a smirk.

Without missing a beat, Cynder once again dived into her shadow, charging forward at full speed. This time, Volteer was quick to respond by sending bolts of lightning her way. Beneath her shadow, she zigged and zagged, dodging the attacks as she made her way towards the guardian. Getting close, Cynder jumped out, getting ready to take a swipe. This attempt was immediately halted by a tail-strike to the head.

Rolling back, Cynder staggered to her paws, looking at the guardian with narrowed eyes. Volteer held an air of superiority as he looked down at her with a smirk.

"Young one, I am a natural at observing the environment and adapting to it, be it my surroundings or my opponents," Volteer said, keeping a firm on eye her. "It's foolish, unwise, and a folly to think I will fall for the same trick twice."

He smirked. "Now then, let me put on display the logical and educated reasoning why Tomas the Wise picked me to be your most worthy of sparring partners."

In the sidelines, Tomas chuckled and straightened his stance, grinning. A slight ways behind him, Cyril rolled his eyes and looked over to Terrador. Placing a claw to his mouth, Cyril then pointed said claw towards his hindquarters. Terrador huffed, glancing away as he shook his head.

Cynder didn't have time to take in all that was going on in the sidelines. Before she could blink, Volteer had opened his maw and sent a careening lightning bolt towards her. She jumped to the left and immediately her eyes went wide as a yellow paw came flying towards her. Pumping her wings, she took to the air, barely feeling the claws skim her tailblade.

She looked down and her jaw all but dropped. Despite his size, Volteer was trailing close behind, mere inches way from being able to grab her tail with his paws. Cynder scowled and winds began to kick up around her, lifting her wings and propelling her faster as she streaked across the curving walls of the arena. Volteer was quick to take note of her slowly creating a gap and the wind current pushing against his own wings.

"Arial current manipulation as well, a most uncommon element for even those who are naturally born with such a gift!" Volteer said, an amused smile on his face. "I must say, you are providing a lot of physical evidence to support your repeating quantum conundrum!"

Cynder could only blink, looking back with wide eyes as the guardian still managed to keep pace with her fairly well, all the while seeming more intrigued by the situation than actually focused on the battle. She shook her head, narrowing her eyes as she let shadow tendrils flow around her. If Volteer wasn't going to take this seriously, then she would have to make him.

Spinning around, Cynder spat out a glob of shadows at the nearest patch of wall. As it struck, shadowy tendrils shot out, flailing rapidly as they attempted to latch on to their target. Realizing it not a moment too soon, Volteer quickly darted away from the wall, shooting a lightning bolt at the shadow snare. The bolt exploded on contact with a thunderous roar, smothering the shadows out.

Cynder used his momentary distraction to capitalize on the situation. She flew up towards the ceiling, then spat out another blob of shadows. It stuck to the ceiling and began to spread out, before droplets of shadow began to drip down. Volteer looked up at the

sight and quickly flew to the side to avoid being hit by the sudden downfall. Cynder smirked, continuing to add to the shadow-raincloud as much as she could.

It didn't matter how quick Volteer was. He was still a big target in this shadowy rain. Sooner or later, they would hit their mark.

Despite her confidence, Volteer kept up his swift dodging, managing to keep one step ahead of the shadow-rain. Looking up at Cynder, he saw her keeping the rain constant, the shadowy patch on the ceiling growing with each blob she added to it. Volteer narrowed his eyes, knowing that there was only one way he was going to stop this rain. Opening his maw, he let out a massive bolt of lightning towards the dragoness. Cynder barely had time to register it out of the corner of her eye before she was knocked out of the air.

Volteer smirked, attempting to capitalize on the situation by heading towards the falling dragoness. As darted over, though, he felt a sudden cold icy surge on his back and his wings immediately being forced together. As he began to fall, Volteer glanced back, seeing a glob of shadows on his back, tendrils firmly grasping onto the base of his wings and forcing them firmly together. Despite how much he struggled, the shadows refused to give way and the guardian slammed into the ground hard.

Gasping for air, Volteer forced himself up in a daze. He stumbled to the side, but jerked in place when one of his paws refused to move.

Finally coming back to his senses, Volteer glanced down to see his left forepaw being firmly held to the ground by a puddle of shadow. As he struggled to pull himself free, he felt another ice-cold touch on his back that slid down to one of his hindpaws and locked it in place. Volteer looked up and his eyes went wide in horror as the puddle of shadow Cynder had made on the ceiling started to drip down in globs.

It wasn't before long the entire thing collapsed, threatening to engulf the electric guardian. In one final attempt to save himself, Volteer

shot a bolt of lightning that struck the shadows and burst out in a flash of light, creating a massive hole straight through the puddle.

Not wasting a moment, Tomas brought up a barrier around the watching guardians and loopers. The entire dojo was engulfed in darkness for a few brief seconds before the shadows began to slide off the barrier. As vision returned and the barriers dissipated, the group was met with the sight of Volteer being held firmly in place by shadow tendrils, the rope-like things coursing all over his body like blood veins and clamping his maw shut.

Cynder stepped forward, a smug look on her face.

"Wooh! Way to go!" Classic said, raising a paw triumphantly.

Cynder chuckled, looking towards the group with a smile. Said smile faltered slightly when she saw the concerned look on Legend's face, but it was hard to dampen the sense of pride she felt from the cheers of the other loopers.

"Don't get ahead of yourself now."

Cynder's expression went dark and she looked back to Tomas. He held an amused smile on his face.

"Volteer's wit is as quick as he is. Don't count him out yet."

Cynder raised an eye-ridge, but her confusion only grew when she heard a muffled voice behind her. Looking back at Volteer, she saw him smirking under the tendrils. She looked on blankly, wondering how exactly he could appear so confident despite his restricted movement.

"All of you may want to shield your eyes in some way," Tomas said, quickly conjuring up a pair of sunglasses and doing so for the rest of the non-combatants in the room.

Cynder narrowed her eyes before looking back at Volteer. In her time trying to figure out what was going on, she had been completely oblivious to the electricity arcing across Volteer's body. Her eyes went wide and she shook her head, a scowl on her face.

' *Right. Dragons don't need their mouths to channel their element, even if it's the easiest way to do so.'* She shook her head again, quickly jumping back. *'No matter, his movements are still restricted by my shadows. All I need to do is keep out of range until I can figure out a way to knock him out.'*

Cynder gave a confident smile. The battle was still won, and now all she needed to do was strike the finishing blow. As the electricity continued to spark all over Volteer's body, though, her smile began to fade, her eyes narrowing.

Taking a closer look, she noticed that the tendrils holding Volteer still were starting to dissipate. She blinked, her mouth hanging slightly agape at the sight. It was then that she saw one of the electric sparks strike a tendril, causing it to retract and dissipate in a flash. Cynder's eyes went wide, the realization of what Volteer was attempting to do finally hitting home. She needed to end this before he managed to break free.

Without a second thought, Cynder charged forward, claws bared and ready to pierce the electric guardian's scales. Volteer smirked as she drew near, his electricity sparking more vigorously the closer she drew. Finally, he surged up, throwing his head back as a sudden flash engulfed the arena. Cynder—and the loopers who were unfortunate enough to realize too late why they needed their sunglasses—let out a yelp of surprise.

She stumbled back, multicolored dots clouding her vision as she fumbled about. Shaking her head as her vision started to return to her, Cynder looked forward and her jaw dropped.

Volteer stood triumphantly tall, the shadows purged from his body, looking down at Cynder with an amused grin. She stumbled back,

eyes wide as Volteer chuckled.

"Pssh," Cyril said from the sidelines, his expression going flat. "I was hoping I could convince this dragoness to leave him like that for the rest of the day."

Terrador shook his head, glancing away as he placed a paw over his forehead.

Despite her shock, Cynder managed to regain her composure, quickly getting into a fighting stance as she scowled.

"How!?" she demanded, digging her claws into the dirt.

"Simple, really," Volteer said, an amused look on his face as he raised a claw. "Throughout the battle, I observed that your shadows retracted whenever hit by a bolt of electricity. I had originally brushed the notion off as conflicting elements, but when the shadows threatened to engulf me, I noticed the electricity I had hit the shadows with had created a far larger negated radius than I had originally expected. That's when it hit me."

Volteer grinned, electricity dancing off his claws. "It wasn't the conflicting elements canceling one another out, it was the illuminating flash it caused. While your elemental energy allows your shadows to exist in brightly lit areas without needing something to caste them, they still share the common weakness of mundane shadows. Bright, illuminating flashes can still purge them from existence."

Cynder looked on blankly, then scowled. Quickly, she dived into her shadow again, heading towards Volteer. He smirked before opening his maw, letting another bright flash engulf the room. Without warning, Cynder was ejected from her shadow and thrown back across the arena floor, dazed.

"I do hope you have more in your arsenal you've built up over these repeated quantum leaps," Volteer said, a grin on his face. "Because,

as I said before, I do not fall for the same trick twice."

Cynder shook her head, looking at Volteer with a scowl. The electric guardian held an almost smug expression on his face, and she couldn't hold in a growl. Shadow tendrils began to dance around her claws and, in response, Volteer's maw began to glow again. Cynder narrowed her eyes, digging her claws into the ground.

Shadow was almost useless against Volteer now, a fact that Cynder found hard to swallow. She had always treated it as her main element, since she had no clue what her natural one was, and having it rendered useless by such a mundane solution enraged her to no end. As much as she just wanted to charge in and use her shadow-claws to smack the electric guardian across the face, she also knew that doing such a thing would be foolhardy. As much as it pained her to do so, Cynder forced the shadows dancing around her paws to recede.

Taking a deep breath, she eyed Volteer with a hard look, ready to move at a moment's notice.

' *Keep a level head, Cynder...'* she thought to herself, her tail twitching back and forth. *'You're not at a complete disadvantage by not having shadow. You still have three other elements to work with… Even though I doubt the guardians would let the use of poison slide.'*

"Your move, young one," Volteer said, an amused expression on his face. "Unless you have finally come to the realization that attempting to take on one who is the best in their field of study is a foolhardy endeavor, and that you should just leave the rest to us professionals."

"Have you finally come to the realization that nobody knows what the hell you're talking about half the time?" Cynder said, smirking when she heard a short laugh coming from the sidelines.

Volteer's expression went flat, shooting a stern look towards the ice guardian holding a paw over his maw, then looked back at Cynder. "Now, now. Being frustrated by your disadvantage is no justification for such unflattering remarks."

Cynder held her smirk, watching as Volteer hunkered down into a pounce position. She mirrored it, faint winds already beginning to surround her. Although not having the shadow element was going to make this battle ten times more annoying, it was by no means a game changer. All she needed to do was show Volteer that she could easily handle herself in battle, shadow element or no.

The standoff lasted for several seconds before the electric guardian made the first move, firing off a bolt at Cynder, who in turn rocketed to the side, winds flaring underneath her wings. Without missing a beat, she took to the air, and so did Volteer, the two dragons once again rocketing around the arena. Cynder scowled, glancing back and darting out of the way of another electrical blast.

As she headed towards the middle of the arena, she smirked and pulled a sharp turn, soaring right by Volteer. He quickly came to a halt as he turned around. Before he could continue the chase, Cynder again flew by him at break-neck speeds, and it wasn't long before he realised that she was circling him. As she did so, the winds began to violently kick up and Cynder became nothing but a black, blurred ring.

Then, with a rushing roar, a miniature tornado encased Volteer, sending him spinning wildly in the center as he struggled to keep balance. Once again, Tomas quickly set up a magical barrier around the other guardians and loopers, keeping the group from being sucked into the attack.

Inside the tornado, Volteer was quick to send out electrical blasts whenever he caught sight of the black blur, but, despite his swift attacks, they all seemed to harmlessly bounce off the walls of the miniature tornado. Volteer scowled, though his eyes were dazed. He

shook his head in a vain attempt to stay focused, the air around him thinning and his head beginning to pound.

It didn't take much for Volteer to realize what Cynder was attempting. She was planning on using the eye of the tornado to thin the air around him and cause him to pass out from lack of oxygen. Despite the desperate situation, Volteer had to admit it was rather clever. Underhanded, and possibly dangerous if she didn't have the foresight to cut the tornado soon enough, but clever nonetheless.

Knowing he didn't have much time, Volteer let the electricity build up within him, doing his best to keep calm as to not limit his air supply any more than it already was. Electrical current bounced off his scales, arcing to the ground as the air became supercharged.

Outside the walls of the tornado, Cynder managed to catch a glimpse of what was going on within. At first she narrowed her eyes, but they soon went wide when she realized what was about to happen.

Cutting the tornado, Cynder quickly dived into her shadow. Even knowing its weakness, maybe, just maybe...

At the spot where she had dived, the air became cold and it seemed as if even it was being pulled into her shadow. Then a dark pulse rang out and shadow tendrils flailed outwards, giving off an eerie purple glow.

In the sidelines, Classic blinked and narrowed his eyes. "What the…?"

Unfortunately for Classic, not a second after he'd muttered those words, the arena was engulfed in blinding light, electricity exploding from Volteer in every direction to the accompaniment of a dragoness's pained roars.

"Cynder!" Legend yelled, slamming his paws against the barriers keeping them safe.

Beneath the shadows of her fury, Cynder growled, feeling as if something had wrapped around her and was trying to forcefully pull her out of her shadow. Nonetheless, as she poured every ounce of energy she had into it, Cynder's shadow stood defiant in the light, the dark tendrils reforming whenever a lightning bolt came to strike them down.

Before long, a glimpse of black scales appeared out of the shadows, smoke fading away as her shadow started to recede. Electricity struck her back hard, causing her to let out a yelp in pain. With a determined growl, Cynder dug herself back into the shadow with all her might, willing it to stay strong in the face of adversity.

Finally, as the light began to die down, the spectators were met with the sight of a panting Volteer, his head held low as he struggled to stand. Across the arena, Cynder slouched out of her shadow, her body twitching as electricity arced all over her form. For a moment, both were unmoving. Volteer was the first to speak, raising his head and looking towards Cynder.

"Not bad, young one…" he said, panting as he lowered his head. "Not many can claim to have forced a guardian to use their fury…"

"Nor could many claim to have tired Volteer out enough to where he talks normally for a change," Cyril said, eyes wide in disbelief.

For once, even Terrador stared wide-eyed at the sight.

Volteer chuckled before looking back up at Cynder. She finally began to move, her head hanging low as she did her best to keep from falling to the floor, electricity still arcing over her body. Volteer huffed, a smile on his face.

"Though I am still mildly concerned, you have proven yourself quite capable when it comes to fighting. Even when put at a disadvantage, you managed to think on your claws and come up with an adequate solution that I only managed to escape by using a good bulk of my power," Volteer said, grinning as he began to head back towards the

other elders. "As such, I hereby step down from the opposing position and thereby grant you access to the battles ahead."

Volteer glanced back, a smile on his face. "Do make sure my decision here wasn't an unjust one, now."

Cynder glanced back up at the electric guardian before giving respectful bow. Volteer nodded and both dragons went back to their respective sides.

As Cynder headed back towards her group, Legend was quick to step forward with a smile. Stretching his wings forward, he went to embrace his mate. As Cynder lent forward to meet him, Legend was caught off guard when electricity arced between them, giving them both a rather good zap and causing them to stumble back.

Cynder blinked, then gave a sheepish smile. "Sorry. Guess I'm still a bit charged up from the last battle."

At this, she was met with a chorus of chuckles and groans from the loopers at large, while Tomas made his way back into the center of the arena, eying who would be the next opponents…

(Sorry if this chapter was a bit on the long side. Was hoping to get all the sparring matches out of the way so we could continue the main plot, but this chapter had already reached over 15,000 words just from those three matches alone. As such, I felt best to split it for the readers (and my beta-reader's) ease.

Next chapter will hopefully finish up the sparring matches and, after that, as I likely said before, there will only be one more major thing that'll happen before the loopers finally go to take on Malefor. Not entirely sure how many more chapters that'll be, but I promise you this now. There will be no more detours from the main plot, be it for world-building or otherwise.

As a post beta note, Riv expressed concern over Legend saying Classic was going to have his match canceled. Incase it wasn't obvious then, he was suppose to be teasing him. Also made a few minor touch ups after Riv's beta to address some more concerns she had, which went unbeta'd as a result. They're really short stuff, mind you, so I'm hoping I didn't miss any obvious mistakes, but if you noticed any minor errors... that's why.

With that out of the way, though, only two more of the group have yet to be tested, or have yet to say whether they want to or not. However, isn't Cyril the only guardian left of the group who hasn't battled? How will they handle that? Will Cyril be pulling double duty or will there be an approaching challenger…? Find out, next time!

As always, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and if you enjoy the story, make sure to check out the story's official FF.N Forum.

Until then, this is TokoWH, signing off. Have a nice day!)

Fire VS Ice (!)

(Fused Loop 1.1 continued) (Feat: TokoWH, Ukelele, and AbZ) (Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

A claw hovered over the dashboard, reluctant to bring the surveillance screens back to life. Malefor had recently returned from his reprieve and it was then that the thought came to him:

'Is this what I truly want?'

A fair question. Of course, Malefor knew that he had to check back on the loopers sooner or later. It was obvious that they were on his trail and, if he even considered a cowardly escape, they would spread the word, sending the entire Dragon Realms on his heels. For his own sake, it was best to stand his ground and keep discouraging the Waterian scum with his golem army. Eventually, his strongest opponents would confront him and, once they were disposed of, he would be safe. What then?

'All this time, I thought I could find dragons untainted by sea serpent blood. My golems would bring them here and we would band together against the half-breeds.'

Noting that he was the only one in the factory who wasn't brainwashed, Malefor figured that he was indeed the last true dragon.

'Of course, no one comes. If anything, I encouraged the rest of the races to ally with...them.'

Through the window, he regarded the finished automatons moving down the assembly line with disappointment.

'And what of the golems? They're not even close to being my proper successors if they can only do as I command. Once I die, they'll simply collect dust.'

His gaze returned to the console before him and Malefor set his paw down on the machine, resuming his study on the loopers. While his network of Convexity prepared the live feed once more, Malefor made up his mind.

'I've gone too far to be forgiven by anyone. Once the hybrids disappear, this place will be my home. My sanctuary.'

The electrical charge that was still in the air left an uneasy feeling about the dojo as Tomas glanced back-and-forth between the two groups, holding a claw to his chin. Classic looked over to Legend and Cynder, the former holding his mate gently as she leant against him, the occasional twitch still affecting her limbs as she took deep breaths to calm herself down. Legend smiled, kissing her on the forehead.

Classic scowled, doing his best to not let out a groan of disapproval. Taking a deep breath, he forced the scowl off his face. There was a bigger question on his mind.

"Hey," Classic said, catching both Legend and Cynder's attention. "What was that back there, anyways?"

"What was what?" Legend asked, giving him a blank glance.

"That giant electric thunderstorm thing that motormouth did in the last battle," Classic said, tilting his head. "I haven't ever seen a dragon pull off such a powerful attack before. Also, before that happened, Cyndy here dived into her shadow again, but was different than what I saw before… Like, it was more intense or something."

Cynder raised an eye-ridge at Classic's choice of a nickname, but brushed it off and gave Legend a blank stare. Legend blinked, looking at Classic blankly, before the light-bulb finally went off in his head.

"Oh, right," he said, a smile on his face. "I kind of assumed the dragons of your world knew how to do that like our world's dragons do, but I suppose I shouldn't be too surprised considering how many differences we've observed so far."

He cleared his throat and Classic rolled his eyes as Legend stood up, holding a claw to his chest as he prepared to go into mentor mode. Despite the obvious playfulness of it, it caught Ember's attention as well. As she looked discreetly over at them out of the corner of her eye, Legend gave a smile.

"Basically, to give the short version, they were using their furies," Legend said, raising a claw in the air. "As dragons in my world fight, it gradually awakens something within us. As the battle mounts, often in moments of extreme need, dragons can channel their elements with much greater potency for a short time. As this most often occurs in untrained dragons during times of great emotional distress, it is known as a dragon's 'fury.' Mana reserves within the body are constantly depleted to maintain an almost godly output."

"Okay…" Classic said, raising an eye-ridge. "So, basically, it's like an elemental overdrive thing?"

"In a sense," Legend said, giving a nod. "Mostly, it manifests as a giant pulse or explosion, like with what Volteer did, though it is able to be channelled in other ways."

Legend glanced over to Cynder, who nodded.

"For example, like what I did," Cynder said, taking over as she looked at Classic. "I used mine defensively to keep me safe and to cancel out my shadow element's apparent weakness." Cynder paused, glancing away with a frown. "Granted, I wasn't entirely sure if it would work, and even then I was nearly pulled out of it…"

Legend's brow furrowed and he looked at Cynder as she stared at the ground, still frowning. Classic narrowed his eyes.

"Okay, so," he said, quickly stepping forward. "In a sense, could it be used for something like super mode?"

"Super what?" Legend asked, looking back up with a blank expression.

"Super mode," Classic repeated, a smirk on his face. "It's a term I heard floating around the loops. Basically, it's where you can increase your power drastically at will if you're faced with someone stronger than you are, with little to no drawbacks."

"Eh…" Legend paused, looking at Classic with a frown. "Yes and no. While channelling a fury does grant a major power-boost to your element, it only lasts for a few brief seconds, at most, before you end up burning out your mana reserves." He smiled. "Generally, it's far better to release all that energy in one burst to clear out the room, or to use it defensively like Cynder did."

"And even then, it's best to use it offensively if you're not confident about how much mana you have, to avoid facing any more adversaries afterwards," Cynder said, looking back over to Classic.

At that, Classic smirked. "Oh, don't worry about that. In case you haven't already taken note, I'm no slouch when it comes to that." He took a step forward, cracking a confident grin. "So, when do you think you could teach me that?"

Legend blinked, staring blankly at Classic. It didn't take long before a smirk appeared on his face and he narrowed his eyes at his counterpart. "What…you want me to teach you something? I thought you were allergic to studies."

"Oh, har, har," Classic said, rolling his eyes. Then a chuckle escaped him and he looked back at Legend with a smirk. "Seriously, though, seems like it could be useful. Makes me wonder what a magic fury would be like."

"Um…"

The group of chatting dragons were quickly silenced and all eyes turned on the pink dragoness sitting behind Legend and Cynder. Ember flinched at the sudden attention, clearing her throat.

"I wouldn't mind learning that too, i-if it's not too much trouble," she said, quickly looking back towards the arena.

Cynder gave Legend a concerned glance. Noting the apparent worry on her face, Legend nodded before glancing between Ember and Classic.

"Maybe another loop," he said, shaking his head. "There's a lot that can go wrong when it comes to learning dragon furies, and if you two were to get injured now trying them out, there's no telling if we'd ever be able to fix this mess and regain control of the loop."

Classic frowned before giving Cynder a flat glance. She gave a sheepish smile, then looked away. Nonetheless, Classic had to admit that Legend had a point, though he found it hard to suppress a smirk.

"Fine, but keep in mind, I'm going to hold you to that," Classic said, then gave Cynder a cocky grin. "And that includes Embs, too."

Cynder narrowed her eyes at Classic, which only served to widen Classic's grin. Legend gave a nervous chuckle. In a desperate attempt to change the subject, he glanced over to the dragoness in question.

"You know, speaking of which," he said, a nervous grin on his face, "you've been rather quiet throughout all of this, Ember. You feeling okay?"

Ember jumped and looked over with a forced smile. "O-oh! Me!? I-I'm fine! Why wouldn't I be?"

Legend narrowed his eyes. Clearing her throat, Ember quickly looked away again, her forced smile wavering under his stern glare.

"R-really, I'm fine…" she said, glancing at the ground. "Just…having a bit of a hard time taking this all in."

Ember looked back up, forcing a smile again as best she could, while the other three all gave her concerned looks. A nervous chuckle escaping her throat, Ember looked back towards the arena. Elder Tomas was eying the loopers intently. When his gaze met hers, Ember flinched.

Tomas held a claw to his chin, watching as Ember quickly averted her gaze. He raised an eye-ridge. Of the loopers viewed so far, she didn't seem as experienced in combat as the others, her nervous fidgeting being an easy give-away. However, when the loopers had decided who would stay and who would attempt to go, she hadn't passed like many of them had, which had to mean she believed in her abilities in some manner, if only slightly.

Tomas stared at her intently, silent, as Ember kept her head low. She was inexperienced—yet, somehow, Tomas sensed that she held a lot of potential. It was a shame that Ignitus wasn't there… He would have been the perfect teacher for her, as well as the best candidate for this match. Alas, the entropy of life could be rather cruel.

Shaking his head, Tomas allowed himself an amused smile. That did not change his judgement of her, not in the slightest. She may not have screamed confidence, but she was far from incompetent. Hopefully, she'd be able to get the training she deserved one day.

For now, there was the match to think about, and only one guardian was still in peak sparring shape.

Tomas glanced back at the guardians, quickly noting that Cyril was the last one who wasn't bushed or in desperate need of a rest. Noticing his glance, Cyril smirked, a proud expression on his face as he held a paw to his chest. Tomas frowned. Though gifted in the ice element, Cyril was always so prideful, so overconfident in his abilities. It was something that Tomas wished he'd outgrow, especially at his age, but the ice guardian wouldn't have any of it.

While being prideful in one's abilities and lineage wasn't inherently bad, the levels he took it to would have brought shame upon his fellow guardians, had it not been for his near mastery of the ice element.

Tomas rubbed his chin, raising an eye-ridge. In a sense, it was almost fitting this matchup had happened. A lot of potential but zero self-confidence, verses master potential but far too much overconfidence. While one could argue that Ember had an unfair advantage, being a fire dragon going up against an ice dragon, Cyril could easily make up the gap with his elemental mastery. It would take far more than fire alone for Ember to win—and, deep down, Tomas felt like allowing Ember to accompany the others would be a good thing in the long run, despite the danger.

With that thought in mind, Tomas smiled, looking between the two groups as the decision was made.

"The next match will be Cyril verses Ember."

Ember jumped upon hearing her name called, looking on in wide-eyed apprehension. She stood in place, shaking, and gulped nervously. Legend blinked before glancing over to Cynder. The dragoness in question was frowning, until she stepped forward and draped a wing over Ember. At this, Ember jumped once again, looking at Cynder in surprise.

"You know, you don't have to do this if you don't want to," Cynder said, giving her a concerned look. "You only just started learning the basics of self-defence. It might be for the best if you stayed behind." Cynder shook her head before giving a reassuring smile. "None of us would think any less of you if you did."

Ember stared blankly at Cynder before glancing behind her. Legend gave her a soft smile, his eyes full of concern as he stepped forward.

"Cynder's right. You've already been a great help so far," he said, sitting down next to her and also draping a wing over her. "You don't

need to force yourself to continue if you don't want to."

Ember blinked again, looking at Legend with a blank expression before her gaze eventually shifted towards Classic. Classic just stared back with an emotionless expression. Ember stood motionless under his gaze before glancing downward, frowning. Several seconds later, she took a deep breath and looked up at Classic again, her eyes wide and her frown gone. Classic smirked, giving a quick nod.

Appreciating the simple movement, Ember took another deep breath before breaking free from under Legend and Cynder's wings. Forcing a smile, she glanced back at them.

"Thanks for the concern, but…" Ember closed her eyes for a moment, then reopened them, her smile becoming a bit more confident as she straightened her stance. "This is something I have to do."

With that, Ember looked back towards the arena, seeing Cyril standing there with an almost smug expression on his face. Her confident smile faltered under his gaze, but Ember stood her ground and made her way towards him.

As Ember walked away, Cynder was quick to shoot a glare at Classic, who, in turn, just cracked a grin. Cynder growled, looking away with a scowl. Seeing this, Legend gave a nervous chuckle and turned his attention towards the impending battle, if only in hopes of avoiding a very possible argument.

As Ember came to stop a good distance away from the ice guardian, Cyril let out a chuckle as she took a defensive stance before him.

"Young one, I hope you aren't relying on the fact that you're a fire dragon alone to win the battle," he said, a confident smirk on his face. "Because I can already see three things wrong with your stance."

Ember flinched, but kept her determined expression. Cyril scoffed.

"Make it four, now," he said, his smirk turning amused. "While apparently you are still rough around the edges, the fact that you have the general idea of the stance means you at least have a basic idea of *some* combat techniques." Cyril smirked, holding a paw to his chest. "While I am curious to the extent of your abilities, I must warn you: I am of the refined and regal ice dragon lineage, with knowledge of techniques passed down to me that no other dragon has even heard of."

Volteer let out low groan, rolling his eyes as he reclined on the ground. "His egotism is only rivalled by his narcissism."

At this, Terrador gave a nod. Cyril scoffed, giving his fellow guardians a cold glance before looking back down at Ember. She held an unamused scowl, her eyes narrowed as her claws dug into the ground. Cyril smirked, noting her quivering limbs despite her best efforts to conceal her fear.

"I have to admit. You have a lot of courage to face me despite obviously not wanting to," he said, holding a paw to his chest. "Nonetheless, it'll take far more than courage to defeat me. I hope there is more to you than my eyes see at first glance, young one, because, otherwise, it would be best to take your friends' advice."

Cyril huffed as Ember froze at the mention of her obvious fear. He held his smirk, inconspicuously observing her. So far, the other loopers had proved to be far more than they appeared, which had piqued his curiosity. Though chances were he could have easily broken Ember's stance with a quick tail-whip and then pinned her down, part of him wanted to know if she was just as capable of the same feats.

Deciding to give her a test, Cyril held his head up, keeping an inconspicuous on eye on Ember as he did so, making sure his chin and throat were in plain sight. How Ember would take this bait, and

whether or not she'd be smart enough to not do it, was something he eagerly waited to find out.

Ember felt her muscles tense as the seconds ticked by. Her claws tapped the ground as Cyril stood almost motionless in place, watching her from the corner of his eye. She let out a low growl before jumping to the right and charging forward, letting loose a fireball towards the guardian.

Cyril ducked, looking up as the fireball sailed over his head. Even if he hadn't ducked, it would have still missed the horns on his head by inches. He looked back in time to see Ember charge forward, her claws enveloped in a soft blue light that extended them by several inches. As she went to strike, Cyril quickly took to the air, dodging back and looking down at her with a smirk.

"So, you're also a chi user..." Cyril said, eying her curiously. "Not bad. Chi is an art very few dragons can grasp, and even fewer can master it." He held a paw to his chest, his smirk turning into a grin. "I have to admit, even with my proud lineage, the techniques of chi still elude me."

"Such a shocking, surprising, and unexpected revelation," Volteer said in the sidelines, giving Terrador a flat glance.

Terrador returned the look. Above the battlefield, Cyril frowned, but quickly shook it off as he looked back down at Ember.

"It's a shame Ragnar isn't here. I'm sure he would have been very intrigued by this turn of events," he said, shaking his head. "Alas, he was never the most sociable of dragons. Despite being the guardian of chi, he refuses to teach it to anyone who he perceives isn't worthy."

In the sidelines, Classic's eyes went wide and his jaw almost dropped. "Ragnar's here!?"

"Guardian of chi?" Legend and Cynder asked together, giving each other blank looks.

"He may have been interested in you, considering you have apparently grasped it without his guidance…" Cyril continued, crossing his forelegs as he looked down at Ember. "Of course, your techniques are still very rough. Your aim with your fireballs leaves much to be desired, and you telegraph your attacks far too much, leaving yourself wide open for counter-strikes."

Ember tensed up, her claws digging into the ground as she narrowed her eyes. Cyril huffed, a cool breeze escaping his nostrils as the smirk returned to his face.

"Now that I know your abilities when it comes to the first strike," Cyril began, before quickly dive-bombing towards her, "let's see your abilities when it comes to you being attacked!"

He opened his maw, sending forth a rain of small icicle shards. Ember gasped and jumped to the side, letting loose a stream of fire to block some of the shards, melting away the assault. She stumbled when she hit the ground, and Cyril smirked.

"Keep a strong stance at all times!"

Ember followed the sound of his voice, seeing as Cyril had changed his direction. Cyril held his left paw out towards her. Instinctively, Ember jumped to the right. Cyril huffed.

"As I expected!"

Before Ember could react, Cyril thrust his right paw out and returned his left to his side. Ember gasped as his claws latched onto the back of her necklace and lifted her into the air. A second later, she came to eye-level with Cyril, who had an amused look in his eyes.

"Would I be correct in guessing your instincts told you to jump right when you saw my left paw coming at you?" he asked, raising an

eye-ridge.

Ember stared flatly at him, letting out a low growl. Cyril chuckled.

"You can cut the tough dragoness act," he said. "You're not the first dragon who trained under me to think you need to act that way, and you won't be the last."

Ember scowled and narrowed her eyes. Cyril rolled his.

"A better move would have been to charge forward underneath me before I landed. That way, I couldn't act should you have jumped back or to the side as you did." Cyril smirked, holding up a claw. "Act, never react. Fight your instincts as much as possible. That is the first rule of fighting on the field, regardless of what element you possess, or if you're even a dragon at all."

Ember growled, beginning to struggle in Cyril's grasp. As she swiped her claws at Cyril's foreleg, he let her go and she fell to the ground with a slight thud. Ember shook her head, then jumped back up with a scowl. Cyril huffed, rolling his eyes.

"Really now," he said, shaking his head. "That act you're putting on is most unbecoming of you."

Ember scratched at the dirt, steadying her nerves. She had already been caught by him shortly after the battle started, and if it wasn't for the fact that he wasn't taking this seriously yet, she likely wouldn't have been able to escape like she had. Ember let a puff of smoke escape her nostrils, her flames ready to jump forth at her call. If she wanted to come out of this like Classic, Legend and Cynder, she'd need to kick it into overdrive. Her tail began to swing back and forth, the very tip starting to glow.

With a quick flick of the head, Ember spat out a fireball that went sailing towards Cyril. He huffed and charging forwards as the fireball went sailing harmlessly over his head, noticing Ember beginning to lean to the side.

"Attempting a diversion? A good plan," he said, raising his paw. "But unfortunately for you, you're still telegraphing your moves!"

Ember stopped in her tracks, looking towards Cyril with a smirk, her tail flailing in the air as a translucent light followed the tip of her tail-spade. Cyril's dragon's eyes went wide and he flared his wings out in an attempt to stop. Unfortunately for him, it was too little, too late. His paw slammed against a sudden translucent barrier that had popped up in front of him, a sickening thud ringing out that caused almost all of the onlookers to cringe. As he staggered back, it became clear that a few of Cyril's claws had been trimmed, leaving the clippings on the other side of the barrier.

While almost everyone was speechless at the sight, Classic grinned and lifted a paw in the air. "Whoo! Go Embs!"

Ember smirked, but she wasn't done yet. She charged forward, letting out a stream of fire as Cyril recoiled from jamming his paw into the barrier. He stumbled back on his hind legs as Ember began to swipe at them with a quick combo of claw–, tail– and flame-strikes. Following Cynder's teachings, she made sure to keep Cyril off-balance as much as she could.

Cyril grunted, flaring his wings out and attempting to take off. Catching this from the corner of her eye, Ember raised her head and let loose a fireball, the concentrated flames hitting their mark and causing Cyril to yelp in pain. In his momentary distraction, Ember began channeling her chi into her tail before swinging it around, creating a wave of energy that slammed into the guardian's hind legs and sent him crashing onto his back.

Cyril let out a low groan, looking up to see Ember jumping up into the air and attempting to dive-bomb him. His eyes went wide and he rolled out of the way as Ember slammed into the dirt, her chi claws leaving visible marks in the ground. Before she could recover, Cyril got back to his paws, spun around, and swatted her with his tail. Ember let out a yelp as she went rolling across the arena.

"Ember!" Cynder called, looking on with wide eyes.

Ember let out a low groan, slowly getting back to her paws and scowling at Cyril. Cyril took a deep breath before looking down at her with a serious expression.

"It would seem I have been underestimating you," he said, lowering the paw that had slammed into the barrier.

As it touched the ground, Cyril winced and quickly lifted it back up, scowling. His paw didn't appear broken at a glance, but he couldn't apply pressure to it at the moment, which was never a good thing in battle. Looking back towards Ember, he saw her keeping a narrow-eyed gaze on him.

He huffed. "It would appear you are more skilled than I gave you credit for. I had no idea that you could use magic like that."

Discreetly, Cyril began moving the wing that Ember had hit with her fireball and felt a sharp jolt of pain in return. He managed to keep a straight face despite this. He had suffered worse injuries before. If he really needed to, he could likely still fly with it, but not for very long.

"You also appear to have better aim than I previously observed." Cyril shook his head before giving Ember a stern look. "However, there is something very serious I need to bring up about that last tactic you attempted."

He took a deep breath, lowering his paw to the ground again and doing his best not to put too much pressure on it. Now that he knew Ember was far more skilled than she appeared at a glance, he couldn't let on that he couldn't effectively use one of his paws anymore.

"While it was clever of you to trick the enemy into thinking you were pulling off a diversion, and then using the barrier spell to daze them when they charged…"—Cyril raised his paw and showed the clipped, flat surfaces where his claws used to be—"there was the

very real danger that, had you performed the spell too late, I could have lost more than my claws when I attempted to grab you."

Ember's eyes went wide and a frown began to form on her face.

Cyril gave her a stern glare. "While this sparring match may be to test your skills at surviving in combat situations, I believe my fellow guardians would agree that anything that could cause major bodily harm, like losing one's limbs, shouldn't be allowed."

He glanced over towards the other guardians and, in return, got a nod from Tomas. Looking back towards Ember, he saw she had regained her composure and was once again in her attacking pose, attempting to make herself look as intimidating as possible. Cyril held an amused expression, the air starting to become frigid around him.

"Now then, since you're proving to be far more of a challenge than I had anticipated, I think it's time I started taking this spar more seriously as well." Cyril's breath was icy cold, a cool mist escaping his lips as he spoke. "Up until now, I have just been testing your abilities. Now, however, the preliminary tests are over and the final exam has begun!"

Cyril walked slowly forward and, with each step taken, patches of ice began to form under his paws. He smirked, raising a paw to his chest.

"It is time I showed you why I take such pride in my ice dragon lineage!"

I-is it... Please, it can't... No, it can't fail after one use!'

The soft whine from the console mercilessly teased at Malefor's nerves. It wasn't unusual that the surveillance system would need to "warm up," but it was taking far too long for Malefor's liking.

Immediately after he had assumed the worst, however, audio and video finally reached him.

"...take such pride in my ice dragon lineage!"

Whose ice dragon lineage? Why was that pink whelp glaring at an adult? The other loopers, why were they standing on the sidelines?

Scales bristling, Malefor felt as if his rib cage was stuffed with icicles. *'What else has happened behind my back?!'*

A cold wave of mist shot out of Cyril's maw, freezing the ground as it shot towards Ember. Moving quickly, she darted into the air, looking down at Cyril and shooting out a fireball towards him. He raised an eye-ridge, noting that, at its current trajectory, it would land at his paws. He smiled smugly.

As he opened his maw, another blast of ice-cold mist billowed out, engulfing the fireball and exploding into a thick cloud of steam. Ember blinked, but didn't have much time to let that sink in before a flurry of ice-shards came flying towards her. On reflex, Ember's tail began to flare and her magical barrier formed in front of her, the shards shattering on impact. As the fog began to clear, she saw a thick cloud of mist coming at her.

Even if her barrier could block it, Ember didn't take warmly to the idea of being caught in a barrier of ice. Quickly, she shot off to the side as the mist left a large chunk of ice on the ceiling.

Cyril narrowed his eyes, flexing his wings and feeling the sting from the burn still there. He winced, quickly dodging to the side as a fireball shot at him, landing just inches away from where he'd been. As he staggered to the side, he landed on his bad paw and let out a yelp of pain as he nearly fell over himself. Looking back up, he saw Ember hovering in the sky, watching his movements with a frown.

Cyril huffed. There was no denying his mobility had been severely reduced from those attacks. He'd rather not fly on his damaged wing unless he had to, and his quick movements on his paws were nearly reduced to nothing. If Ember had the sense of mind, she would have flown in for the finishing blow right then and there—that she hadn't done so was something that Cyril was quick to note. In any case, he wasn't about to point that out. He needed to even the odds, to reduce her mobility to be more in tune with his current state.

Cyril smirked before looking over to Tomas.

"Dearest Tomas," Cyril said, giving a respectful bow, "would you be so kind as to put up a barrier around the sparring arena?"

Tomas nodded and a solid barrier formed around the sparring arena. Ember blinked, quickly looking around at it before gazing back down at Cyril. The guardian had his eyes closed and was digging his claws into the ground as a translucent mist began to envelope him. Ember shivered, feeling the air grow cold around her. Not wanting to risk it, she quickly brought up a barrier around herself.

The air began cooling around Cyril, almost compressing his body as he let the spiritual essence of his element flow through him. The ground cracked as ice began to form under his paws.

In the sidelines, Cynder's jaw dropped, her eyes going wide as she looked at the Spyros in horror.

"By the ancestors! Is he really going to use his fury on her!?" she asked before scowling towards Cyril. "You'd better not hurt her or you'll have me to deal with next!"

Legend looked on with a stern glance, noting the spiritual energy emitting from Cyril. Immediately, he could feel something was off. Though there were similar signs, it didn't feel like a fury. No, this felt almost like…

Legend's eyes shot wide open and he stared blankly into the arena. Cyril glancing towards the onlookers sternly.

"Rest assured, I do not plan to cause any serious harm," he said, glancing back up towards Ember. "However, I was selected to test your friend's abilities, and to assess whether or not she belongs in the field of battle. As such, I will do everything in my power to make sure she's ready and that serious harm will not come to her on the field."

Behind her barrier, Ember looked down at Cyril with an indifferent glance. Cyril smirked as icy winds rapidly flared up around him.

"Now then… You've proven yourself quite capable so far." Cyril narrowed his eyes, still smirking. "But can you keep it up when your advantage is taken away from you?"

With that, the air around Cyril exploded in an arctic blast, a miniature blizzard taking place within the barrier as the arena became suddenly ice-cold. Ember let out a yelp and Cynder promptly charged forward, eyes wide and jaw dropped.

"Ember!" she cried, placing her paws against the barrier. She was quick to retract them, though, as her paws felt the sting of arctic temperatures on the barrier's wall.

As the flurry of snow began to settle, the onlookers were presented with what appeared to be a huge ball of ice blocking their view of the inside.

It was almost eerily silent within the globe. The light was dim and ice pillars hung from the ceiling and otherwise protruded all over the place. Near the upper edge, a giant warped ice-ball disrupted one of the pillars. Slowly, an orange glow began to shine within it. Before long, a wave of fire pierced through the ice prison and Ember jumped out, landing on the pillar and nearly sliding off in the process. Her whole body shivered violently from the unrelenting cold.

"Not bad, eh?"

Ember lifted her head, hearing Cyril's voice echoing through the maze of ice.

"This is one of my more interesting techniques," his voice continued, seemingly coming from everywhere at once. "Terrador prides himself on his earth-pillar trap, but earth isn't the only element that can pull this off."

Ember quickly turned her head to the side, seeing an icicle coming straight at her. Jumping out of the way, she spread her wings to fly, but was sent falling down again when she smacked into a pillar above her. Flailing about, Ember dug her claws into the nearest pillar, kicking up ice as she skidded on the glassy surface. Stopping just short of falling off, she slowly pulled herself back up onto the pillar.

"With my ice dragon heritage, it was a simple task to reverse-engineer the process, as well as further improve upon it."

Ember narrowed her eyes, looking around the dark ice cavern with a scowl.

"I will warn you, I have more tricks in store than just this," Cyril said, sounding almost amused. "It'll take far more than fire alone to overcome the majesty of ice."

Outside the arena, the loopers looked onward, but could do little to see through the thick layer of ice encasing the battlefield. Cynder was by far the most antsy, her tail twitching back and forth as she kept inching closer to the barrier.

"Hey, calm down."

Her gaze snapped towards Classic, who was giving her a stern look. Cynder growled, scowling.

"Why should I!?" she snapped, taking a step forward. "It's your fault she's in this mess in the first place!"

"I'm responsible for sending an army of golems upon the city? Or calling a rogue admin to troll us?" Classic asked, raising an eye-ridge. "Neat. I never knew."

He smirked as Cynder began to dig her claws into the dirt, her tail twitching back and forth as she gave him a sharp glare. Quickly, Legend stepped in between them.

"Now, now. Everyone just calm down," he said, looking between the two.

"Quite frankly, I'm kinda creeped out by how far you're taking this 'big sister' act," Classic said, giving Cynder a stern look. "I get that you two are supposed to be sisters in this loop, and you two really hit it off in the friend department, but I'm seriously beginning to worry about you."

"Like you care!" Cynder said, narrowing her eyes. "Ember…"

She glanced down, shaking her head, before looking back up at Classic. "Ember's been a great friend to me. I can easily say she's one of the best female friends I've ever had."

"Barring the fact that she's the only female friend she's ever had," Legend Sparx muttered to Classic Sparx, who rolled his eyes in turn.

"Over the time I've known her, she's helped me a lot," Cynder said, glancing down. "She helped me realize that it was alright to just enjoy the loops, and how I could still honor those I had wronged without feeling guilty all the time…" She raised her head, giving Classic a stern look. "But it's more than just that. She really does feel like family to me. She's the closest thing to it I've ever had."

Classic blinked, his eyes widening a little, but still he forced his expression of indifference back to the front. Cynder took another

step forward, slamming her paw into the ground.

"That's why I don't want to see her get hurt! I've already seen her break down over being held at knife-point and I'm not going to see her break down when she gets overwhelmed by an army!" She shook her head, looking over towards the sphere of ice. "I don't want to see any harm befall her. Even if I have to face the full wrath of the guardians to keep that from happening!"

Silence fell over the group as Cynder and Classic stared at each other, Legend uncomfortably glancing between them. Classic shook his head before looking back at Cynder.

"I get what you're saying, okay?" he said, narrowing his eyes. "However, you're missing one major point."

"And what would that be?" Cynder asked, scowling.

"You're not the only one who's changed since you two met."

Cynder blinked, raising an eye-ridge as Classic turned to look at the icy arena. Through the ice, they could see the faint glow of flames, which was soon followed by a stream of sharp blurs. The sound of battle could still be faintly heard throughout the dojo. Classic turned back to Cynder, a stern glint in his eyes.

"Cynder, why do you think she's fighting right now?" he asked, raising an eye-ridge.

Cynder looked at Classic blankly before she narrowed her eyes. "Because you pushed her to do it! She may not be head-over-heels for you anymore, but—"

"Cynder, I didn't push her to do this," Classic said, narrowing his eyes. "I could see it in her eyes just before this started. She wanted to do this, to prove to herself that she could."

Classic considered Cynder's expression of disbelief with an amused smirk before turning back towards the arena.

"Ember's changed a lot since she met you, and not just in the 'going gaga over me' department."

Within the arena, Ember darted through the icy maze, barely avoiding the shards of ice that shattered on the pillars behind her. She reached a paw out and her chi quickly enveloped it, large glowing talons forming on her claws as she grasped onto a pillar in mid-air, spinning around it and heading back in the opposite direction.

"Ever since she's met you, she's become more confident, and not just when it comes to fighting. She's been more outgoing, more willing to try new things, and to stand up for herself."

Ember dodged left and right, pulling a roll in the air as she spun over a barrage of ice-shards, the sharp icy blades missing her by inches. As a second wave came flying at her, Ember opened her maw, a wave of flames bursting forth and engulfing the attack. She shot through her crimson barrier with chi-claws at the front and, as she dived down, she finally caught a glimpse of Cyril within the icy cavern.

"She wants to be there with us, to help us when we need it," Classic said, looking back to Cynder. "But, more importantly, she wants to prove to herself that she can, and to the rest of us as well."

Cynder and Legend looked blankly at Classic, who just looked back towards the arena with a smirk.

"I'm not saying you two can't be best buds or anything," he said, glancing at Cynder out of the corner of his eye. "But if you really want to help her, you need to stop babying her and start believing in her."

The group was momentarily silent as Classic tried his best to see the battle happening behind the ice. Cynder blinked, a blank look in her eyes. Glancing downward, she sighed and closed her eyes with a frown. Legend was quick to give her a short nuzzle on the cheek, though Cynder soon looked back up and give her mate a warm smile.

"You know," she whispered to him, glancing over to Classic, "sometimes, I really do forget that he's you from another universe."

Within the ice cavern, Ember held her chi-claws at the ready as she charged the elder guardian. Cyril quickly raised a paw towards her, but, with quick movements, Ember rolled to the side and landed a few feet away before rushing the guardian, spewing forth a wave of flames. Thinking quickly, Cyril let forth a cool mist, forming an ice wall that blocked the fire. Despite this defence, Ember was hardly discouraged.

Chi spinning around her paw, she slammed her chi-drill into the barrier, piercing through it and charging the guardian. Cyril quickly dodged to the side, attempting to grab her as she rushed by, but a sharp jolt as he stumbled on his bad paw caused him to slip and he hit the ground with grunt. Ember skidded to a stop, turning around as her chi formed again on her claws.

Seeing her once again charge him, Cyril let out a grunt, his eyes narrowed and a scowl on his face. He had to admit, this dragoness was performing far better than he had thought she would. Really, he could have ended the battle right then and there, but...

Moving fast, Cyril channeled his control over the ice of the pillar they were on. Hearing a crackling sound, Ember skidded to a stop as the ice around Cyril gave way and seemingly engulfed him. Before she could comprehend what was going on, the pillar began cracking and she saw Cyril's form darting through the ice and speeding past below her.

Turning around, Ember watched Cyril dart away in shock, barely catching the faintest glimpse of a smirk on his face.

"I told you, didn't I?" Cyril said, his voice resonating through the ice. "There is far more to the ice element than you realize. It isn't all about freezing things."

Ember stumbled as the pillar gave way beneath her. Quickly, she took to the air, glancing every which way for a sight of her opponent. She heard the echo of Cyril's chuckle resonate through the cavern.

"You have performed admirably, young one," he said. "Far better than I had anticipated you would. If I have to be honest, I think you've more than earned the right to fight on the battlefield…"

Ember blinked, staring around blankly at those words. Slowly, a smile began to form on her face. There was a brief pause before Cyril let out a huff.

"However, do not think that means I am giving up now," he said, as Ember caught a glimpse of his reflection briefly flashing by an icicle. "Even if your looper story is true, and you *are* far older than you appear, my pride in my ice dragon lineage, as well as my pride as a guardian, will not allow me to be beaten by one who has the appearance of a child, regardless of how skilled you may be."

Ember spun around, certain she'd seen him rush by.

"While my fellow guardians may have been satisfied with forfeiting, I will not go down so easily. While you have my blessing, you will not acquire a win over me."

A cold shiver went up Ember's spine as the air around her became frigid. She could have sworn the ice cavern was getting darker by the second.

"Now then, not-so-young one… Let's see if you possess enough power to triumph over mine!"

Before Ember could figure out what was about to happen, the cold winds kicked up in what felt like a hurricane, snow and frost billowing around her in a white-out that made it hard for her to even see the snout in front of her face. Ember shook violently, the air feeling like it was near arctic-levels of cold, before she began to scramble back, her paws stinging with the ice pillar's cold touch.

Without a second thought, she spread her wings, but was immediately pushed back by the gale-force wind. Her back impacted the ice and sent a stinging cold jolt up her spine. Ember gasped in the cold dry air and quickly rolled to the side, scowling at the frigid touch of the ice, and once again got to her paws, practically dancing in place to lesson the stinging cold pain on her pads.

Her eyes sprang open not a second later as she felt one of her hind paws being anchored down, causing her to slip and fall onto the pillar belly-first. Getting back to her paws, Ember glanced back and her jaw dropped.

A thick coating of ice had formed on her paw and was slowly inching up her hind leg. Though it didn't sting with cold as much as the pillar under her paws, that did nothing to calm her. Instinctively, Ember opened her maw and let out a wave of flames. She cut it not a second later, her eyes wide, when she saw her flames evaporate into steam inches away from her face.

Cyril winced, pushing his burnt wing as much as he could as he spun around the outskirts of the cavern, an icy blue glow encasing him. He made sure to keep his fury at bay as much as he could. He didn't want to seriously harm Ember—having made sure to keep the temperature of his ice only just cold enough to maintain itself—but, at the same time, he wasn't about to lose.

Cyril smirked. He knew Ember wasn't in any serious danger. He had used this technique many times in the past to apprehend many a fugitive. He had never once thought he would have to bring this out in a sparring match, but there were things that could surprise even the savviest of guardians.

Ember struggled, the ice now up to her waist even as she tried to break it. It wasn't long before she felt her leftmost forepaw become glued to the ice pillar, too. Looking down in horror, she saw it slowly starting to become encased in ice. In a last-ditch effort to at least hold the freezing process off, she raised both of her remaining free paws off the ground as high as she could. She knew it was pointless, as the ice would soon start encasing them once they crept their way up her other paws, but…

Ember lowered her head, eyes closed as a frown creased her forehead. There was no denying it. She was about to lose and there was nothing she could do to stop it. When faced with a similar situation in the previous matches, Classic, Legend and Cynder had managed to find a way around it, but, for her, it was hopeless. At most, her flames could keep her head from being frozen over, what with how much this blizzard reduced her range, and the ice creeping up her body made her too cold to use her natural heat as a fire dragon to melt it.

There was absolutely no way out.

Ember took a deep breath. Maybe it was just the way it was supposed to be? How it was always supposed to be? Even if Cyril gave her his blessing, the others would still look down on her for being the only one who didn't really win her match. All the others, when faced with the guardians' strongest moves, managed to overcome them, but she wasn't even sure if it was possible for her to do this.

Maybe it was best if she did stay behind. Maybe she was never supposed to stand by the others as equals. Classic, Legend… Cynder.

Ember felt a cold sting on her face as a lone teardrop traced down her cheek and froze on her scales in less than a second.

The others were destined to be heroes. She, however, would always be a bystander…

"Ember!"

Ember raised her head, her eyes going wide. It was faint, but it almost sounded like…

"Ember! Don't give up!"

Outside the ice cavern, the group of loopers watched on with worried faces. The icy dome had gone eerily dark; the light from Ember's flames hadn't shone for a good while. Among all the loopers, it was Cynder who stood forth, staring at the shield of ice with a determined look in her eyes.

"No matter how hopeless things may seem, there's always a glimmer of light!" she yelled, as loudly as she could, in the hope that Ember would hear. "I know you can do this, so long as you don't give up on yourself! I've never seen another dragoness who has managed to learn and understand so quickly as much as you have in the few months I've known you!"

Ember blinked, glancing around as Cynder's words echoed through the cavern.

"You can't give up! I know you can do this!"

As Cynder's words echoed in her ears, Ember glanced down, closing her eyes.

"I believe in you! Now you just need to believe in yourself, Ember!"

She took a deep breath, feeling her lower body almost completely encased in ice. Even if Cynder believed in her, she still wasn't entirely sure how she was supposed to get out of this mess. But she didn't want to disappoint Cynder, to let her belief in her be in vain. There had to be something she could do, something she hadn't thought of…

Ember's eyes widened and her head shot up, her mouth falling open. That was it! Cynder had been in this exact same situation in her match, where her powers had been nullified by her opponent. In order to counter it, she'd needed to use her fury to withstand Volteer's.

But how in the realms was she supposed to use *her* fury? She wasn't even sure how to begin channeling it. On top of that, Legend had mentioned that a lot could go wrong when a dragon was just beginning to learn how to use their fury, that they could cause serious injury to themselves if not careful.

Ember shook her head. That didn't matter. Her fury was the only thing that could get her out of this, and she needed to do this. She needed to prove to herself that she wasn't weak and that she could just as easily keep up with the others. Even if it backfired, and she couldn't join them in stopping this Malefor guy, at least she would have tried.

Taking a deep breath as the ice continued to encase her, she cleared her mind, thinking back to Legend's words when he had started teaching her to use her flames. Hopefully, there was something he had said then that could give her a clue on how to channel her fury.

' *An easy way to tap into an element without forcing it is to get into its mindset. Though we are unsure if elements are sentient or not, they do respond to certain emotions and mindsets. For fire, growth, passion and thoroughness seem to be the most common ways of invoking it.'*

Ember let out a deep sigh. If that worked for breathing fire, maybe it could work for using her fury as well.

She let her mind drift back to the events of earlier that day. How she had joined in the battle with the golems and the giant crab thing; how, at the very least, she had been able keep up with the others then and there; how she had grown as a combatant. How she wanted to protect herself and others as well. How she didn't want to

just sit on the sidelines anymore. Her passion become a better fighter.

And now, her resolve to finish this fight like the others had. To prove to herself that she had improved, that she wasn't just a scared little dragoness anymore, and that she could stand alongside the others with her head held high. Her thoroughness to see her growth through to the very end.

Ember felt her muscles tighten, the cold of the ice creeping up her body starting to fade away and being replaced with a growing warmth inside her. She could feel it becoming stronger and more intense with each passing second, growing and burning brighter the more she let her emotions take hold. She could feel the strength radiating from it, the power to overcome any obstacle in her way, and now…

' *Clear your mind and feel the fire that flows through your veins. Allow its heat to consume you and breathe with it.'*

Ember opened her eyes as an old, wise voice resonated through her mind. She wasn't entirely sure who it belonged to—maybe it was the spirit of fire itself—but she heeded its words.

Still circling around the arena, Cyril raised an eye-ridge, seeing a glowing orange form starting to pierce through the intense blizzard. As it shone ever brighter, he finally saw Ember standing there, the ice around her slowly beginning to melt away, and, once it did, she began to ascend in the air without aid of her wings. Cyril's jaw dropped as he realised what was going on. Dropping his previous tactic, he stopped in midair, holding his wings in front of him and kicking up a frigid whirlwind. Seconds later, he was encased in a thick layer of ice.

Outside the arena, the loopers caught sight of a steadily brightening orange light within the cavern, the ice on the outside already beginning to melt. Classic blinked, raising an eye-ridge, before turning to Legend and Cynder.

"The heck is going on in there?" he asked, tilting his head.

However, both Legend and Cynder were too busy watching the scene to register Classic's words, expressions of disbelief on their faces as the glow grew brighter and brighter. Before long, their disbelief slowly gave way to smiles. Legend turned back to the others.

"You guys may want to stand back," he said, a smirk on his face.

On the other side of the arena, Tomas himself was also smirking. Just like he had thought… Raising his staff, he quickly encased the arena in a thick magical force-field.

Inside the arena, Ember continued to ascend until she was in the center of the ice cavern, flames jumping from her scales as her eyes remained closed. Fire continued to well up inside her, and she once more heard the voice speak to her.

' *Now, rise up and release the firestorm within you!'*

Not a second later, Ember's eyes shot up and she spread her wings as a maelstrom of crimson flames burst forth from her form, engulfing the icy cavern, blasting away the pillars with ease and bringing forth a blinding light, forcing all those present to cover their eyes. Within his icy barrier, Cyril channeled as much energy as he could into maintaining his shield, but, try as he might, he was slowly beginning to lose ground.

Luckily for him, the firestorm didn't last for long. As quickly as it had happened, it was gone, and the arena now seemed dull after the brilliant light of before. As everyone's eyes began to readjust, they saw Ember slowly descending back to the ground, flames still bouncing off her body as she looked sternly towards her opponent.

With only a thin layer of ice remaining between him and the rest of the arena, Cyril shattered his shielding, taking a deep breath as he stumbled to his paws. Breathing slowly, Cyril lifted his head and

looked at Ember in almost disbelief. After a few seconds of staring, a smile slowly made its way onto his face.

"I can't believe I'm saying this…" he muttered, shaking his head before looking towards Ember with a smirk, "...but I think I've finally encountered a fire dragon that can rival my ice dragon heritage."

Ember blinked, her flames finally burning out as she looked blankly at Cyril. From the sidelines, Tomas smirked and lowered the barrier. Giving a brief nod, Cyril began to leave the arena with a smile on his face.

"I forfeit," he said, closing his eyes briefly before glancing back at Ember. "I'm more than confident that this young one can handle herself on the field of battle."

Ember's jaw hung slightly ajar, as if she had been struck dumb in disbelief. A few seconds later, a smile began to form on her face and she turned around, looking towards the group of loopers. Not a moment later, she found herself embraced in a tight hug. Ember was quick to return Cynder's hug and, all the while, the grin never left her face.

"I did it…" Ember said, tears of joy beginning to well up in her eyes. "I really…really did it."

"Yes…" Cynder said, slowly pulling away and looking at Ember with a smile. "You really did."

"See? What did I tell ya?" Classic said, stepping up to the dragonesses with a smirk on his face. Standing up on his hind legs, he raised his paws to the ceiling. " *You just gotta belieeeeeeeeeeve !"*

Cynder blinked as Ember giggled at Classic's sudden outburst. Looking towards him, Cynder raised an eye-ridge. Classic chuckled, getting back on all fours and rolling his eyes.

"It's an in-joke from my baseline," he said, giving a smirk. "You probably won't get it."

Cynder gave both Classic and the chuckling Ember a flat stare, then shook her head. Looking over to the others, she saw Legend heading over with a smile on his face. As the loopers began to regroup in the middle of the arena, Legend's expression turned stern.

"Well, now that this little detour is finally over," he said, looking towards the three loopers that were going to join him in battle, "it's best we prepare ourselves for the upcoming final assault on Malefor's stronghold. Before anything else, we need to rest. Cynder and I should be fine by tomorrow morning, considering we're used to more intense fighting than these sparring matches."

Legend looked over to Classic and Ember specifically. "What about you two? While I'd prefer dealing with Malefor as soon as possible, I don't want to force you out before you've fully recovered."

"A good night's rest is good enough for me," Classic said, a smirk on his face as he looked at Legend. "Though, first thing tomorrow morning, you're teaching me that fury thing."

Legend frowned, narrowing his eyes at Classic. In response, Classic sat down, raising his forepaws behind his head.

"Come on now!" he said, grinning at Legend. "I'm supposed to be the Dragon Realms' hero. I can't have Ember upstaging me with some uber powerful nuke attack."

Ember giggled as Legend gave a sigh and lowered his head. Lifting his gaze back up, he stared hard at Classic.

"Fine," he said. "However, if you risk harming yourself at any point, we're stopping right then and there." Legend shook his head. "We can't risk any potential fighters getting hurt beforehand. We're

probably going to need all the help we can get just getting to Malefor's fortress."

"Rest assured..."

The loopers paused, glancing back to see Tomas and the guardians heading towards them. Tomas glanced down, a smile on his face.

"We guardians will do anything in our power to help you," he said. "Though we were unable to stop some of you from going in the first place, that's not going to stop us from aiding you in the field of battle in any way we can."

"Thank you," Legend said, giving a respectful bow. "We will need it."

As Legend straightened up and looked at the guardians with a smile, Classic hesitated. Lifting his head and glancing around, he noticed that there was a certain looper missing from the group.

"Hey," Classic said, raising an eye-ridge. "Where's Hunter?"

"I saw him head out of the arena sometime after Ember nuked Cyril's ice caverns," Ihy said, walking over towards them with his laptop held closed at his side. "I can't be sure, but he seemed kind of upset about something…"

"Likely because he didn't win," Classic Sparx said, glancing over to Classic Spyro, "and has to stay back because of it."

Classic gave a nod, a frown on his face. "Probably…"

Shaking his head, Classic got to his paws and darted towards the door. Pausing halfway, he turned back to the group. "I'm gonna go talk to Hunter. You guys continue coming up with ways on how we're going to kick Malefor's butt in the meantime."

Legend scowled. Once again, Classic wasn't getting just how serious a threat Malefor was. Regardless, it wasn't like arguing about it

would do any more good than it already had. Looking back at the others, Legend eyed them all sternly.

"Now then," he said, turning his attention to Tomas. "I admittedly don't know much about the Magic Crafter Realm, so I'm going to need some filling-in on that. Is there anything I should be aware of before—"

"Hold it!"

The room went silent. Classic stopped inches away from the doorway, glancing back over his shoulder. At the very edge of the arena stood Flame, his gaze cold and his stance strong. He stepped forward slowly, rigidly, never once taking his eyes off the group at large. Stopping just before them, he dug his claws into the ground, a near emotionless look in his eyes.

"I believe there is still one dragon who has yet to take your test," Flame said, his voice cold as he hunkered down into attack position.

(A/N: …So, you'd think by *now* I'd realize not to say so-and-so should only take so-and-so more chapters to get through. Granted, I knew Ember's battle was going to take up a bulk of the sparring match part here, but didn't realize I'd end up having to make it its own chapter. I was hoping to completely wrap it up, but alas, as said, I should know better by now.

I'm rather happy with the way this turned out. Granted, Ember slightly handicapping Cyril was the only way I could see her winning, even though she had the 'type advantage' in Pokemon terms, but still, Cyril managed to have the upper paw for a good portion of the fight. I *was* going to have her fight a different dragon, since her fighting an ice dragon might have made it feel like she had an unfair advantage when Tomas picked the guardians previously to specifically counter the loopers, but…I feel it worked out in the end.

On an unrelated note, upcoming will be the one year anniversary of when the mega-arc started. Hard to believe this arc has been going on so long. To say it ended up going longer than I had envisioned would be quite the understatement, putting it mildly. Still, I'm kind of glad it happened.

'Mega-arc' style, as of writing this, seems to be something only the Spyro loops has done so far, which gives it something unique to help it stand out. Even though the Spyro loops as a whole have been going on for more than an year now, the mega-arc is, in a way, when I feel like the Spyro loops really started to kick off and stand on its own.

Not that I'm knocking any other loop compilations, mind you. No, not by any means! I'd still highly recommend checking out quite a few of the other loops compilations if you already haven't. If you prefer more story-driven stuff rather than shenanigan-driven comedy, then at least make sure to check out the Mega Man loops. It starts out pretty story-driven itself, and while it's started to focus on more usual looping shenanigans, it still has some mega-chapters, no pun intended, that tend to be more serious in nature than most loops.

Other than that, there's the FiM loops, which pretty much codified how the loops generally work and is seen as *the* loops compilation at large (granted, considering I always get at least *one* person complaining in the reviews whenever I have a chapter that has a FiM-fused snip in it, I take it not a lot of Spyro loops readers are FiM fans), and if that doesn't interest you, there's quite a few other loops compilations out there to check out.

The Infinite Loops TV Tropes page has a complete link to every current loops compilation out there, so if you're interested in more looping shenanigans, be sure to check it out. I have a link to it on my profile page, under the brief description I wrote for the Spyro loops.

I just want to thank everyone who has stood by us through the year, and here's to hopefully another one. Don't worry, though. This specific mega-arc shouldn't take us another entire year to complete. Though, now that I said it… XD;;; /shot

Also, don't worry. I realize there's been a spam of mega-arc chapters as of late, so I'll likely be focusing on getting a filler shenanigans chapter out soon. Once the mega-arc is done, we'll likely go on a 'hiatus' of filler chapters to let readers unwind a bit, as well as deal with some smaller plot lines that have been going on for a while now.

With all that out of the way, what's up with Flame? Has he lost his mind, or just in a different mindset? Also, what's wrong with Hunter? Will the loopers be able to rest and recover for the big battle ahead or will a few of them have a bit of a restless night's sleep? Find out, next time!

As always, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and if you'd like to join in the fun, make sure to check out the official Spyro loops FF.N Forum.

This is TokoWH, signing off. Have a nice day!)

Sky's the Limit

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx.)

Classic Loop 34.1:

Spyro walked through the portal to Sunny Villa in what was otherwise another baseline run with a frown on his face. For once, he didn't have an idea for how he wanted to majorly diverge from the baseline this time, and it was a fact that bugged him to no end. With nothing better to do, he decided to tread the beaten path in hopes it would give him an idea. As he landed in the realm's usual starting area, he quickly took note of how George wasn't there to greet him like usual. Raising an eye-ridge, he took a step forward.

He was then greeted by shouts of terror from lions and rhynocs alike.

Spyro's expression went flat and he glanced at Sparx. "Well, I did want a divergence from baseline."

Sparx chuckled, quickly following as Spyro ran out into the main area, where they watched a rhynoc run for his life before being punted off the edge of a cliff by one of Sunny Villa's famous giant chickens. Spyro blinked, watching as two giant chickens chased one of the bigger rhynocs around. He raised an eye-ridge before hearing a whimpering sound coming from behind one of the potted trees. Quickly running over to it, he was met with this realm's usual welcoming committee.

"AH!" Councillor George shouted, falling back as Spyro poked his head around the tree. Once he got a good look, though, George quickly jumped to his feet. "Ah, Spyro! Thank the…" He paused, glancing around the tree and seeing the chaos going on. "Well, I suppose I can't really thank the famous giant chickens at the moment, can I?"

"The heck is going on!?" Spyro asked, looking around the tree to see several rhynocs and lions being chased by a giant chicken.

"It's terrible, Spyro!" George said. "It's worse than when the rhynocs invaded!"

"I can see that!" Spyro said, giving George a flat glance. "Now calm down and tell me what happened!"

"Well, it all started shortly after the rhynocs invaded," George said, grabbing onto his tail and beginning to twirl the tuft on the end, all the while glancing at the ground with a sheepish frown. "We were trying to figure out a way to deal with the rhynocs, when these three dragons appeared. It goes without saying that dragons in the Forgotten Realms are a rare sight, so we were rather surprised."

Spyro sighed, rolling his eyes. George jumped before shaking his head.

"Right, rambling, sorry," he said, clearing his throat. "Anyways, they agreed to help us get rid of the rhynocs for only twenty-five gems. At a price that good, how could we refuse?"

"Twenty-five gems?" Spyro asked, raising an eye-ridge. Maybe it was because he was used to Moneybags' outrageous prices, but these dragons were practically asking for what amounted to peanuts in the Dragon Realms to rid an entire army.

"I know! We were shocked at how cheap it was, too!" George said, though he was quick to bite his lower lip. "Of course, when we saw the cardboard contraption they came up with, in what basically amounted to a giant slingshot, we understood why it was so cheap."

Spyro snorted, but managed to keep from busting out into laughter at the mental image. If nothing else, he knew what he was going to do next loop. Shaking his head, he glanced out from behind the tree again, raising an eye-ridge.

"Okay," Spyro said, looking back at George. "How exactly did they go from giant cardboard slingshot to giant chicken apocalypse, though?"

"Well, it was the oddest thing," George said, scratching his head as he glanced upwards. "They were just about ready to start picking off rhynocs when the big dragon of the group caught sight of one of the bigger rhynocs chasing a giant chicken around, and promptly lost his marbles!"

George shook his head, placing a paw on it. "He began chasing the rhynoc around, shout nigh-incomprehensible stuff like 'Unhand that innocent chicken, you giant big bully of the fourth dimension,' and, before we knew it, they ended up in the giant chicken pens and…"

Before George could finish explaining, there was a loud crash and a rhynoc went flying across the sky. Not a second later, a giant chicken jumped down from a ledge, hitting the ground and charging another group of rhynocs. On top of the chicken sat a bulky green dragon, a stern glare in his simpleton eyes as he pointed to the rhynocs.

"Take that, you horned mutants of Hades!" he yelled, chicken-charging another group of rhynocs. "The wings of feather justice have descended upon you!"

"ED!"

The peanut galleries' heads turned to see a stout yellow dragon fly out from behind the buildings, a scowl on his face as he caught up to the chicken-rider.

"Get off the chicken, lumpy!" he demanded, forcefully pointing to the ground as he narrowed his eyes. "At this rate, we're going to have to pay *them* for this scam!"

"But I like chickens, Eddy!" Ed said, looking over to the stout dragon with a frown.

Eddy growled before slamming into Ed. A dust ball kicked up as dragon limbs could be seen poking out of it at random intervals. The chicken began to panic at the sudden act of violence happening on its back before charging off in a random direction. Before they were thrown off into the mess of rhynocs running for their lives, Eddy and Ed grabbed onto the chicken's feathers and held on for dear life.

"Double D!" Eddy yelled, eyes wide as the chicken jumped onto a building. "Stop this crazy thing!"

As the chicken ran off with its reluctant riders, a panting sound was heard coming from one of the pathways. A svelte orange dragon wearing what could only be described as a sock on his head came running down the path before he finally collapsed, taking deep breaths in an attempt to compose himself.

"Please forgive them!" Double D shouted into the air, to no one in particular. "They're really not bad fellows when they're awake!"

Unfortunately for Double D, before he could do anything else, he was rammed by a giant chicken and sent flying onto a rooftop.

Spyro looked on blankly before his expression went flat. Looking at Sparx, he rolled his eyes.

"Outside loopers," he said, shaking his head, before charging out into the chaos.

Sparx shrugged and quickly followed Spyro with a smirk on his face.

"On the plus side," Sparx said, his smirk turning into a grin, "I was actually in the mood for fried chicken this loop."

Legend Loop 34.2:

Cynder sat out on the balcony, looking up at the night sky and the shimmering two moons piercing through the darkness. If this were

baseline, she likely would have been sneaking off at the subliminal urging of Malefor, against her better judgement and against the will of those who cared about her. Even now, she could still feel Malefor tapping at the back of her mind, demanding her to head towards the Well of Souls.

Cynder scoffed, shaking off the feeling without a moment's hesitation, swearing she could hear that demonic dragon screaming at her in the process. The thought got a chuckle out of her. She looked up at the sky with a contented glance.

Despite the fact that they were forced to relive the Dark Master's war over and over again, she couldn't help but find an odd sense of peace in the loops. Malefor never deviated from baseline, even if they didn't head towards that damned mountain. While this meant three more years of war for them, it quite honestly wasn't all that bad.

As Spyro had said many times before, Malefor was the only one who could really challenge them anymore. Even when they weren't working together, dispatching Malefor's army and stopping raids had become almost second nature. Be it apes or golems, their enemies were not really well-trained in combat, mostly relying on brute strength to win their battles—something that was insignificant to a looper.

Often times, they managed to take out enough of the Dark Army to where Malefor was forced to fall back, allowing for small gap of peace in which they could rest and recuperate. And, if that wasn't enough, there were still variant loops and other worlds they could loop into that would let them have a well-deserved rest.

Cynder smiled. It was an odd sense of peace, but one she enjoyed and cherished.

"Yo! Anyone awake!?"

Cynder glanced back towards the temple to see a glowing ball of light whizzing around. It wasn't long before Sparx stopped, catching sight of her, and flew over with a smile on his face.

"Hey, Cyn!" he said, a smirk on his face. "Mind helping a dragonfly out with something?"

Cynder glanced over with a raised eye-ridge. "I take it you're up to your usual shenanigans?"

"Maaaaaybe," Sparx said, crossing his arms with a grin.

Cynder huffed, shaking her head as she looked back out towards the forest below. "Sorry, but I was wanting to take this loop easy."

"Bleh. That's what Spyro said too…" Sparx said, a flat expression on his face as he let his arms drop. Sighing, he placed a hand on his forehead. "You two *always* want to take it easy. I swear, you make messing around in the loops far harder than it should be."

"Can you really blame us?" Cynder asked, a smirk on her face.

"I guess not," Sparx moaned, crossing his arms as he turned away from her. Glancing back, he smirked. "At the same time, can you really blame me?"

"Depends," Cynder said, raising an eye-ridge at the dragonfly. "Somehow, I get the feeling that, had you not had to worry about dying the first time through, you'd have been pulling the same shenanigans back then, too."

"Possibly," Sparx said, resting his hand behind his head. "To be fair, after going through an adventure where accidentally getting squashed was the least of my worries, wanting to get back at it, even just a tiny bit, is kinda understandable."

"Maybe," Cynder said, glancing back out towards the night-time scenery.

"Seriously, you should try it sometime!" Sparx said, turning around with a smirk on his face. "If there's anyone who needs to get back at the baseline, it's you."

Cynder took a silent breath, looking up towards the two moons that hung in the sky. Closing her eyes, she shook her head before looking at Sparx with a subdued smile.

"Thanks, but I don't really think it's my thing," she said, looking back down at the forest. "I'd rather spend my looping time just relaxing as much as I can."

"Come on! That's what Spyro says!" Sparx said, crossing his arms. "The two could be one in the same, you know. Pranking is how I relax!"

"And I relax by enjoying the few weeks or so when we don't have to fight in a near world-ending war," Cynder said, glancing over towards Sparx, a smirk on her face as she rested her head on her forelegs.

"So?" Sparx said, giving a grin. "Doesn't mean you can't have fun during the war, either. You two are more than powerful enough to stomp out entire armies now. Why not take some extra time to humiliate them while you're at it?" Sparx scratched the back of his head, glancing towards the moons. "I'm pretty sure those ancestor thingies you dragons go on about know that if anyone deserves it, they do."

"True, but I'd rather not mess around on the battlefield," Cynder said, closing her eyes. "You never know what Malefor is capable of. Even if he's sealed away for half of the loop, there's no telling what kind of support he could give the apes, and even more so when he's free with his golems taking over the front."

Cynder huffed, a smirk on her face. "Besides, I doubt the ancestors would appreciate me doing something like using my powers to scare the living hell out of Gaul."

"You never know," Sparx said, waving his hand to the side. "Again, if anyone deserved it…"

"True, true…"

Cynder took a deep breath, letting her body go limp as she leant against the balcony, looking off towards the vast valley below. Opening her maw, she let out a yawn, eyes half open as her wings went limp. Several seconds passed before Sparx flew over, resting down on her snout and giving a brief stretch before resting back on her face, hands resting comfortably behind his head.

Cynder looked at the dragonfly as best she could with a flat glance, rolling her eyes. A few more seconds flew by before she blinked and eyed him curiously.

"Sparx?"

"Hmm?" Sparx muttered, glancing back towards Cynder's gaze.

"Do you still hate me?"

"What?"

Cynder raised up and, in turn, Sparx flew off of her snout, turning around to look at her.

"You heard me," Cynder said, glancing downward. "Do you still hate me?"

"Jeez, bit of an out-of-the-blue question there," Sparx said, scratching the back of his head. "What brought that on?"

"It's just, I never expected us to be talking like this," Cynder said, shaking her head. "Back during baseline, you were always terrified of me, always bringing up what I did and never letting me forget it…"

"Now, now, I remember a certain dragoness getting snappy with me at certain points in baseline, too," Sparx said, a smirk on his face as

he crossed his arms.

Cynder chuckled, a smile slowly forming on her face.

"Granted, you started it, but fair point. Still…" Cynder took a deep breath before looking back towards Sparx. "I guess I'm just curious. What changed that made you stop acting like that towards me?"

Sparx paused before slowly turning away and looking up to the sky, the deep purple slowly giving way to a dull orange as the sun rose on the horizon. He stretched, raising his hands in the air before resting them behind his head.

"I guess it just seems pointless to act like that now, what with the loops and all," Sparx said, giving a semi-shrug. "I mean, even if you were to turn evil, we can't technically die, and there's a whole slew of people from other universes who are even stronger than Spyro is." He glanced back, a blank look on his face. "At worst, we can just keep forcing loop resets until we wind up in a loop with someone who can hold you down and bring you back to your senses."

Sparx smirked, turning around and crossing his arms. "Besides, I heard that only people who are genuine good guys can start looping." He gave a wide grin before raising his hand to his face and examining his knuckles with great interest. "Considering you were the next looper after myself to start looping here, you can't be all *that* bad."

Cynder gave him a blank glance before a smile slowly began to form on her face.

"Thanks, Sparx…" she said, glancing down. "That really means a lot."

"Yeah, well, what can I say," Sparx said, still looking at his knuckles. "I'm not the kind of dragonfly to hold grudges."

At this, Cynder snorted, getting a pout from Sparx as she began to laugh. Taking a deep breath, she let the slowly warming breeze of early morning wash over her, a smile on her face. With a shake of her head, she glanced back over to Sparx.

"Tell you what," she said, giving a grin. "So long as Spyro or the guardians don't get caught up in it, I think I may actually help you with whatever it is you have planned this loop."

"Really?" Sparx asked, raising an eye-ridge. "What's the catch?"

"No catch," Cynder said, a warm smile on her face. "It's just the least I could do, especially after what you just did for me."

Sparx blinked, scratching the back of his head as he watched Cynder turn around and head back towards the temple. As she approached the entranceway, she paused and glanced back with a smirk.

"You coming?" she said, raising an eye-ridge.

Sparx held a blank expression before he gave a shrug. He swore he would never know what was going on in Cynder's head, but hey, if she was going to help him with his pranks, he wasn't going to question it.

Fused 34.3:

Legend had an odd sense of déjà vu as he sat in Hunter's apartment. The same familiar faces were sitting around the room, sans one drunken dragon on the couch. The group gave each other odd, awkward glances. Once again, they had been summoned by everyone's favorite admin. Classic shuffled his paws, giving an awkward chuckle.

"Well…this isn't awkward in the slightest," he said, scratching the back of his head. "What do you think Ihy wants to tell us?"

"No clue…" Legend said, staring off into space as he narrowed his eyes. "This is all feeling a bit too familiar for my taste, though…"

"You don't think this could be this variant's baseline, do you?" Ember asked, a worried expression on her face. "I'd rather not go through another war like that again."

"Same," Cynder said, shaking her head. "My Spyro and I get enough war in *our* baseline."

"Relax," Hunter said, raising his paws. "I'm sure it just has to do with something loop-related. I doubt that 'Zoth' guy would try the same thing twice."

"Well, whatever the case, I hope he hurries up," Classic said, tapping a claw on the ground and scowling. "Hunter and I had planned to spend the loop doing what we originally wanted to do this loop with the mas—"

Classic paused, his eyes going wide as he quickly closed his maw. Cheeks puffing out, he held his paws over his mouth. Try as he might, he ended up losing the battle with his body and let loose a mighty belch, expelling a puff of flame in which a scroll seemed to materialize. The entire room fell silent, all eyes on Classic as he coughed up smoke.

"...What was that?" Cynder asked, raising an eye-ridge.

"The by-product of a sneaky dragon," Classic said, glancing flatly over to Cynder, "who wanted to avoid a part of his baseline where all the reports he mailed were 'returned to sender.' " Classic let out a moan, placing a paw on his stomach. "I still have no idea how I let him talk me into that…"

Legend raised an eye-ridge, but soon reached for the scroll, picking it up and unrolling it. He blinked.

"It's from Ihy," he said, looking back up at Classic. "Why is he doing it this way? Can't he materialize it wherever he wants?"

"Ihy finds this method funnier," Classic said, his expression drooping. "He's been tormenting me the past few loops whenever he can, *and* because of a few certain *somebodies* who *keep asking him questions.* "

He narrowed his eyes, a scowl on his face as he looked at Classic Sparx and Hunter. The duo in question quickly glanced away, whistling innocently as their eyes darted around the room. Classic groaned.

"He's had a lot of reason to use me as a glorified email address," Classic finished, letting out a deep sigh.

Legend blinked. He was unsure what an 'email address' was, but he pushed it to the back of his mind. Opening the scroll, he began to read Ihy's note aloud.

"Greetings, everyone. I've brought you all here for an important announcement."

"I wonder what it is…" Ember muttered, glancing at Cynder. "Maybe the loop is ending?"

In response to this, Classic quickly raised his paws in the air, waving them rapidly in front of them. This did little to stop a sudden surge running up his throat, followed by a belch of flames that materialized another scroll. Floating in the air, it drifted over to Ember, who quickly unravelled it and looked down at its contents.

"Take a wild guess."

Ember paused before glancing up at Classic, who just gave her an annoyed look. She gave a nervous chuckle, a sheepish grin on her face.

"Sorry," she squeaked, quickly putting the scroll to her side.

Legend watched as Classic shook his head and sat back with a scowl on his face. Resisting the urge to let out a chuckle, Legend looked back down at the scroll.

"You may notice that this setting is giving you a sense of déjà vu. There is a reason for this."

"Gee, I wonder why Ihy isn't coming here to tell us this in person?" Classic Sparx asked, a smirk on his face.

A quick, loud 'NOOOOO—!' echoed throughout the room before it was followed by a loud belch. Classic groaned, grasping his stomach as the resulting scroll floated towards Sparx, unravelling itself in front of the dragonfly.

"Because I don't want a repeat of what happened the last time I started this setup."

"Don't you think that's being a little bit paranoid, though?" Hunter asked, crossing his arms with a smirk on his face. "I doubt Zoth would try the same trick twice."

"Shut up!" Classic spat, giving Hunter and Sparx a sharp glare. "Quit asking him ques—"

Unfortunately, Classic's outburst was cut off by another large belch. He groaned, collapsing on the floor and grasping his stomach. The scroll flew over to Hunter, who was quick to unravel it.

"True, but you can never be too careful."

"Really?" Legend Sparx asked, a smirk on his face. "Must be hard keeping Zoth from hijacking loops. How hard is it, Ihy?"

Another belch filled the room before Classic, still collapsed on the ground, raised a paw into the air, extending up a single claw in full

view of Legend Sparx. Ember held a paw over her mouth and Cynder gave her an odd look.

"What's up?" Cynder asked, raising an eye-ridge. "Does that mean something?"

Ember just gave Cynder a sheepish grin. In the center of the room, Legend rolled his eyes.

"Okay, guys," he said, shaking his head. "I believe that's enough torturing Spy for one loop."

"Yes! What Ro said!" Classic moaned, slowly picking himself up off the floor.

Legend held an amused smile before looking back down at the scroll. Clearing his throat, he once again began to read it out loud.

"You see, for the past few thousands or so loops, I've been attempting to get another loop online. This has proven rather difficult, due to its setup. I've tried testing out its coding in your loops beforehand, but I'm sure you know how that went."

"You mean crashing five minutes into it?" Classic asked, raising an eye-ridge. He paused, looking blank for a few seconds, before his expression flattened. "Ah cr—"

Legend shook his head, hearing another belch followed by a groan.

"Anyway," he continued, reading the scroll, "it's time I told you something. I'm sure some of you may have taken note of another purple draconian in your loops from time to time."

There was a short pause. Legend glanced at Classic and they looked at each other blankly. Classic shook his head, then raised an eye-ridge.

"Wait… This isn't heading where I think it's heading, is it?" Classic asked, a frown on his face. "I know I've seen some sort of purple,

deformed, gremlin-dragon thing running around in my loops from time to time, but I just assumed it was some sort of loop-glitch thing."

"I've never even heard of this." Legend said, tilting his head. "As far as I know, we're the only Spyros in the loops…" Glancing back down at the note, he blinked.

"Well, you two aren't the only Spyros in the universe. To quote that one guy who everyone remembers the quote from, yet nobody can remember who actually said it: 'There is another.' "

Legend's expression went flat. Legend Sparx smirked, crossing his arms as he looked at the two Spyros.

"Well, this is going to end well. Considering what happened when you two first met…" he said, grinning.

Both Spyros gave Legend Sparx a flat glance before Legend looked back down at the note.

"However, and this may come as a surprise, he is not going to be a looper. Nor is anyone else from his universe. Try as I might, I'm afraid it just presented too many problems to get going."

Legend blinked, glancing up at everyone before looking back down at the scroll.

"Their universe involves a lot of interdimensional travelling, mainly involving the Hub. Naturally, since the Hub universe is the only universe that doesn't need the loops to stay stable, this caused an endless stream of problems. I tried removing the portal-hopping gimmick entirely, but somehow it would always worm its way back in. I tried replacing where they travel to with a possible tandem loop, but the sheer amount of portal-hopping involved still caused a lot of loop destabilization. On top of all that, there's the fact that this universe is a bit of a hot-button topic among the Admins..."

Legend raised an eye-ridge. ' *Hot-button? Wonder why…'*

"With all that in regards, I've decided to make the loop read-only. It's the only way I could have it stay stable, even with all the portal-hopping, on top of the fact that many Admins just flat out *don't* want this universe looping. There will still be a chance that beings from that universe can still loop into yours, but chances are it won't affect your looping experience at all. — Ihy."

With that, Legend rolled the scroll back up and placed it to the side. A brief silence fell over the room, everyone exchanging awkward glances. Finally, Hunter stepped forward and voiced the question that was on everyone's minds.

"Wonder why Ihy brought us all here just to tell us that?" Hunter asked, scratching the back of his head. "If it isn't really going to affect us…"

"I found that a bit odd, too," Legend said, raising an eye-ridge. "And I'm a bit confused at why some Admins would flat out want to actively prevent a universe from looping… Isn't that what's helping repair Yggdrasil?"

"Maybe there was just too much MLE potential?" Ember said from the couch, placing a claw on her chin. "I have heard of some universes becoming read-only due to being nothing but MLE potential…"

"Could also be a quarantine loop," Cynder said, looking towards Legend. "I don't know much about them, but apparently they have something to do with when a universe is so damaged that it risks damaging other loops, or…something like that."

"Could be the entire universe is radioactive," Classic Sparx said, a cheeky smirk on his face. "I mean, have you guys see that gremlin purple thing running around? No way that look is natural."

Classic chuckled, receiving an annoyed glare from Legend. He was about to open his mouth to scold them both for making fun of appearances, but his own Sparx beat him to the punch.

"That's nothing. Have you guys seen that dragoness that looks like a freaking chandelier?" he asked, crossing his arms with a smirk. "I don't know whether to ask her for help blinding Malefor's army or to hang her from the ceiling!"

Legend paused as both Classic and Classic Sparx busted up laughing. Flashwing. From what Legend had gathered in the loops she'd popped up in, that was her name. He shuddered. No matter what loop they were in, she always seemed to have a crush on him, and no amount of telling her he already had a mate would stop her. Glancing over and seeing the mildly annoyed look on Cynder's face at the mention of said dragoness, Legend sighed. Suddenly, he was rather glad the loop had become read-only. The idea of a looping Flashwing sent shivers up his spine.

All of a sudden, they heard a low humming sound coming from outside. The whole group fell silent and raised their heads as the humming grew louder by the second. Not a second later, outside, next to the balcony, a large metallic airship rose up, it's cabin in full view with the Professor standing at the controls. Looking over to the group, the Professor waved to them before pulling out a cell phone from the pocket of his lab coat. A moment later, the phone on the table began to ring. Classic hurried over to it, picking it up and heading towards the balcony.

"Hello, Spyro! …And other Spyro!" the Professor said, turning to face the gathering crowd on the balcony. "Don't mind me! I just wanted to drop by and show off my latest creation!"

"Nice," Classic said, though he narrowed his eyes. "No offense, though, but it's not like I haven't seen airships before…"

"Oh, this is no ordinary airship!" the Professor said, a grin on his face. "Using technology acquired from this loop, I managed to make this airship contain a near-complete replica of my lab within its haul!"

The Professor looked back, a surprising eagerness in his step that was usually only found in children.

"I'm still amazed by how it works! It's almost identical in size, despite the fact that its outer shell looks no bigger than the average airship! It's also surprisingly well-equipped for combat!" He looked back up to the group with a grin. "Not only do I have numerous different lasers, missiles and the like to keep me safe, this thing can go from zero to three-hundred in only a matter of seconds!" The Professor was practically jumping up and down in excitement as he turned back to the controls. "Once I loop into one of those outer-space loops, I'm going to see if I can get a light-speed drive installed in this thing!"

"That's…great, Professor," Classic said, raising an eye-ridge. "How did you make this thing so quickly, though? This loop only just started this morning, and it's barely an hour or two past noon."

"Oh, you can thank my assistant this loop for that!" the Professor said, looking back into the inners of the ship. "Come on now, don't be shy."

A barely audible disgruntled sigh was heard over the phone. Slowly but surely, a green dragon that appeared to be in his mid-teens came into view. He was wearing a blue helmet over his head, and his wings appeared to have been reinforced with a blue metal plating. The dragon held a stoic expression as he looked towards the Professor.

"Come now, it's rude not to introduce yourself," the Professor said, holding out the phone to him.

The dragon stood silent, looking down at the phone with an unreadable expression on his face. After a few seconds, he picked it up.

"Very well," the dragon said, holding the phone up to his helmet. Turning towards the group on the balcony, he continued to hold his unreadable expression. "Greetings. I am Drobot."

No sooner had he spoken did he hand the phone back to the Professor, barely giving Classic time to so much as raise an eye-

ridge. Glancing back towards the hull, Drobot's voice could barely be picked up by the phone.

"Professor, I believe I may be able to increase the molecular output of the laser defence system, but, as of this moment, I possess insufficient tools for doing so," Drobot said, looking back at the Professor. "Pardon me for interrupting your 'catching up' with your acquaintances, but I suggest we head back to Magic Crafters to make the necessary modifications."

"Oh, yes, yes. You know, though, Drobot, while I like working on new experiments and creations too, even I need a break every now and then," the Professor said, adjusting his glasses. "You don't want to go burning yourself out there, now."

"It is quite alright. Mental capacity reserves are still yearning for more science in the time we have left," Drobot said, turning around and heading into the ship's hull. "I would prefer continuing my research while I have no further distractions at this present moment in time."

The Professor held an amused look on his face as watched Drobot head back into the ship, before he looked up towards the balcony again.

"Nice boy. A bit quirky, but he has quite a good head on his shoulders," the Professor said, turning back towards the controls. "Now then, probably for the best that I return to Magic Crafters, too. I'm quite eager to see what other technological marvels this loop has in store. Bye!"

"...Read-only means that anyone from that universe can't be a looper, right?" Hunter asked, scratching the back of his head.

"I think so," Ember said, tilting her head.

"Maybe the Professor just told him what to do when building that thing?" Classic Sparx suggested, before giving a slight chuckle.

Both Spyros watched blankly as the ship sped away. They glanced at each other before looking back at the horizon, then face-pawed simultaneously.

' *Somehow,'* Legend thought, giving a sigh, *'I doubt their universe being read-only will do much...'*

Legend 34.4:

Spyro the legendary purple toucan let out a long, annoyed sigh, perched upon his ledge of the toucan temple with an unamused glint in his eyes. Malefor, the first purple toucan, had apparently started the war over a lack of birdseed and sent his vulture army out to ravage the bird kingdoms.

"Apparently, it's an epidemic throughout Yggdrasil," said Jenny Everywhere, who was currently a fire toucan. "Even the Admins are toucans at the moment! No one's quite sure just what the heck is going on and I'm being used as their messenger to explain this to everyone!"

"Come on, Spyro," said Cynder, the shadow toucan, an amused look on her face. "We've faced weirder variants than this before."

"I suppose…" Spyro said, shaking his head. "Still not amused by it, though."

" *You're* not amused by it!?"

Spyro sighed, glancing to the side to see a miniature flying ship, which was plated to the teeth in metal armor and had more weapons on it than Malefor's army likely had.

"Try being a dragonfly in a loop filled with *birds!* " Sparx's voice echoed from the ship as he made frequent quick turnarounds every so often. "I haven't been this scared since baseline!"

"Sparx, calm down," Spyro said, giving the mobile fortress a flat glance. "We're not going to eat you."

"It's not you guys I'm worried about!" Sparx said, flying his fortress right in Spyro's face. "It's everyone else! Just this morning, I saw the guardians looking at me with hunger in their eyes! Insect population is at an all-time low this loop! I—"

A piercing shriek echoed throughout the temple, causing Sparx's flying fortress to jolt. Sparx moved it back, looking to the left and the right, before looking back at Spyro.

"Sorry, Spyro, but you're on your own this loop!" he said, quickly darting away in his mobile fortress. "I'm too handsome to be some bird-brain's snack!"

Watching Sparx fly off, Spyro sighed and placed a feathery wing over his beak.

Classic 34.5: (Feat: Zerorock14)

"...and the only reason I'm a boy in baseline is because my egg just happened to be in the wrong place at the right time. That's our theory, at any rate," said an annoyed Spyra.

A currently female Zero retorted, "At least your sex wasn't determined via a coin toss. I seriously hate my old man."

Female Robin then spoke up. "Good stories everyone. Here's to us: a bunch of guys that Yggdrasil likes making girls for some reason."

Rousing cries of "hear, hear" across the table came from Spyra, Zero, Tails, the God Empress of Mankind, Shepard and Bonnie. From a nearby table, Darth Revan silently raised her own glass in agreement.

Legend 34.6: (LoSxA:tLA pt. 2) (Feat: AbZ)

Spyro looked back over the weary band of soldiers that he had somehow been put in command of. He wasn't the highest ranking among them, but he had pulled their bacon out of the fryer on more than one occasion. Between that and his demeanor, they had come to trust him.

Soon after his 'stunt' with the Earthbender ship, he had been drafted into military service just in time for a campaign to take back the Fire Nation. The commanders had timed almost everything so that their forces would hold the advantage. Time of year, time of day, and waiting for a critical opening from the Water Tribe and Air Nomads attacking the heart of the Earth Kingdom. Those three factors had contributed greatly to their success in the initial strike. However, it was during the push inland that disaster had struck.

The Fire Nation army had needed to pass through a canyon to reach their next destination, and both sides had known it. The Fire Nation generals had suspected a trap, but thought that, through superior firepower, they could break out of the ambush quickly and advance with the enemy ranks scattered. Spyro liked to think they were a bit drunk on both alcohol and success when they made that plan. It made what came next boil his blood less.

It was a massacre. There were no other words for it. Ten thousand soldiers had entered that canyon, and one hundred Earthbenders had collapsed their tomb. Very few Fire Nation soldiers had survived. Spyro's company had fared the best, being sheltered by a new, but particularly stubborn outcropping. After that...Spyro released himself from his restraints.

The rest of the day had been spent trying to save those they could. Now there were maybe twenty soldiers, himself included, still able to continue forward, hoping to regroup with a larger force. It was Spyro's job to make sure they lasted that long.

As he continued along ahead of the group, he felt a pulse of chi ring out from the ground. His hand shot up to catch the small rock that would have otherwise impacted his head. The blow wouldn't have been serious enough to kill him, but there would have been blood everywhere and his head would have been ringing for the rest of the day at least.

He could still feel the vague traces of chi leading back to the person who had sent the rock at him. Was this some sort of initial attack? ...No, there didn't seem to be any follow-up. Perhaps they were worried about giving away their position if they continued? It was a somewhat reasonable guess, Spyro rationalized, as these Earthbenders didn't seem to be able to use chi or mana to detect others through the earth.

Sending out his own pulse, Spyro felt five other presences than there should have been in the general vicinity. An attempted ambush? The most likely ambush site was still a while off, meaning that he would probably have noticed before the trap would have been sprung. But still, it was strange. Was the sixth just trigger-happy? Spyro doubted it. An Earthbender's specialty was waiting. They wouldn't act a moment before they were ready, unless you forced their hand.

So what had set off this Earthbender? Spyro frowned as a thought made itself known. It *was* possible, but he couldn't be sure. There would really be only one way to check.

With that in mind, Spyro signaled the other soldiers to hang back and leapt into the trees. Springing from branch to branch, he added some of his mana into the rock and threw it *away* from where he knew it had come from. In support of his theory, the bender stopped the stone before it could attract the ambushers' attention, pulling it back.

His theory confirmed as much as it could be, Spyro turned to the bender's location and blitzed forward. He dropped near the edge of the clearing, getting a clear look at the bender for the first time. She seemed to be a young girl. If he wasn't sure of her abilities, her appearance might have been somewhat disarming.

"Well you're sure not Twinkletoes," the girl grumbled. "You awake?"

Spyro blinked. Another looper? "Yes. I'm Spyro, anchor of one of the Dragon Realms loops. I'm the one known as Legend or Ro," he replied evenly. "Are you local?"

The girl broke out a huge grin and thumped her chest. "The name's Toph Bei Fong, greatest Earthbender in the multiverse! Remember it!"

Spyro smiled. The girl reminded him of his loop twin: all confidence and enough skill to back it up. "A pleasure."

The girl snorted in response. "Don't get a big head because you got picked as the Avatar this loop. I've kicked Twinkletoes' butt frequently, and he has much more experience bending multiple elements than you do."

"Of that I have no doubt," Spyro agreed. "My own form of elemental manipulation involves mana, not chi. I am sure that any bender knows chi's intricacies much better than I. I have no interest in trying to claim your title."

"So you can affect the earth in baseline? Then why are you in Fire Nation this loop?"

"I'm normally a dragon, and while I can utilize four elements—fire, earth, ice and electricity—the first one I learned, and the one that seems most associated with dragons in general, is fire."

Toph's eyes narrowed. "What's your biggest feat of earth manipulation in baseline?"

"Ah," Spyro began, "I can't really say. The first thing that comes to mind... Well, I'm sure that I had my ancestors' guidance and help with it, so I can't claim it as my own. Beyond that, though, I can't really think of anything grand."

At this, Toph pushed one of her feet forward, a subtle but quick strike. Spyro countered with one of his own. Toph smirked. "Not bad, scaley. It took Twinkletoes years to react that fast. You might just be good for a workout."

"I have some questions, if you don't mind."

"Tell you what," Toph said, settling into a stance. "I'll answer your questions...as long as you can keep me entertained. And just so we don't accidentally start rearranging the continents, let's stick to baseline level power, shall we?"

Spyro nodded, and the spar and question session began.

Classic 34.7:

Spyro walked down the 'boss hallway,' as he had taken to calling it, towards Ineptune, the dragon amulet around his neck to protect him from the warping effects of the dark gems. With an amused smirk, he glanced at Sparx, who looked mildly annoyed.

"I'm just saying, Spyro, why can't I have my own series? Sparx the Dragonfly would be a massive hit, I can feel it!" Sparx said, grinning.

Spyro rolled his eyes. "Sparx, you're letting the dark gems get to you again."

"Well, whose fault is that!?" Sparx said, crossing his arms. "Stupid dragon-only amulets…"

"Don't worry, Sparx, the Professor is working on something to counter the dark gems for you guys, too," Spyro said, giving a grin. "In the meantime, just try to keep from raging against the hubverse too much."

"Hey, I can't promise anything now."

Spyro rolled his eyes, walking towards the giant water arena before him. Of all the foes he had to face in this part of his adventure, Ineptune was perhaps the weirdest. Gnasty Gnorc's dorkiness during this part of baseline could at least be justified by the dark gems. Spyro huffed, a smirk on his face. That was not to say Gnasty Gnorc wasn't a bit of a dork anyway, but he was a dork even by *his* standards during the dark gems hunt.

Red was the cause of all this, so it wasn't hard to figure out why he'd end up fighting him, though his robot dragon form was a bit of a surprise. Try as he might, though, he couldn't really find any way to justify Ineptune. 'She,' for lack of a better term, was more or less just *there* . He had no idea how Red had found her, nor what she really was in the first place. In any case, it wasn't like it mattered too much. He could still easily beat her, regardless.

Glancing down at the water, Spyro paused, his expression going blank. A smirk appeared on his face and he glanced over to Sparx.

"You know," he said, giving a grin, "I'm surprised I didn't think of what I'm currently thinking in baseline. Blame it on the dark gems, I guess."

"What?" Sparx asked, raising an eyebrow. "What are you thinking?"

"Oh, you'll see," Spyro said, jumping off the platform and gliding to the one below.

He landed on the platform with a smirk, opening his maw, and a sizzling crackle echoed forth. Ineptune sprang forth from the water, but, before she had time to go about her speech, Spyro let loose a wave of electricity.

Hunter paced outside the entrance to Ineptune's lair with an impatient step. Normally he wouldn't worry about Spyro or anything, but the purple dragon had promised to spend some time with Bianca this loop, in the hope that she would awaken soon too, a promise he

had still yet to honor. Sure, he'd been expecting Spyro to be reluctant on letting his best friend's girlfriend loop, but he had no idea he'd be this stubborn about it.

Suddenly, a bright, blinding flash shot out from the cave and Hunter quickly closed his eyes, bringing his arm up over his face. As the light began to die down, Hunter blinked, looking on blankly as his eyes began to readjust.

A few seconds later, Spyro sulked out of the cave, his eyes wide and parts of his body twitching without warning. Electricity arced between his horns and rebounded off his claws. Standing blankly for a few seconds, he looked at Hunter in a daze.

"Hunter," he said, voice shaking as he swayed back and forth. "If, by chance, you wind up as a dragon and have to go through my baseline, don't attempt to use electricity to cheese the Ineptune fight. Just…trust me on that."

With that, Spyro promptly passed out. Hunter looked blankly down at him before placing a paw on his forehead.

Legend 34.8:

Ignitus awoke with a blink. Scanning his surroundings, he saw that he was in the Dragon Temple. Its well-kept physical condition could only mean one thing. Spyro had told him of the loop where he'd awakened as him on the night of the temple raid, yet failed to stop the eggs from being destroyed. Having heard of it, Ignitus had himself braced for such a loop.

He smirked to himself. While anyone else might have been distraught at the idea of having to live through this nightmare again, Ignitus had hoped this loop would pop up sometime soon. He likely couldn't stop the apes from destroying the eggs. If Spyro himself couldn't, even being far more powerful than he was in baseline,

Ignitus had no doubt he couldn't either. However, that didn't mean he couldn't take a third option.

Quickly rushing towards the hatchery, Ignitus pulled out a large cloth from his subspace pocket. He may have failed to protect the eggs in baseline, but he wouldn't let such a thing happen again. As he rushed down the hall, he passed Terrador and Cyril, who gave him odd looks.

"Ignitus?" Cyril asked, raising an eye-ridge. "What's gotten your old bones so activate all of a sudden?"

"No time to explain!" Ignitus said, pausing only for the briefest second to look at his fellow guardians. "We need to get to the nursery, now! The temple is about to come under attack by the apes!"

With that, Ignitus returned to running down the hall, a very confused looking Cyril staring after him.

"What!?" Cyril asked, raising an eye-ridge.

Terrador huffed, narrowing his eyes. "So, he felt it too…"

Without saying another word, Terrador darted after Ignitus, leaving a thoroughly confused Cyril standing there blankly. Expression going flat, he let out a sigh.

"Sometimes I wonder if I'm the only guardian who doesn't have visions from the ancestors…"

Ignitus smiled to himself, watching the boat he'd stored in his subspace float down the river with an entire clutch of eggs in it, Spyro and Cynder's among them. Terrador, Cyril and Volteer all stared at the fire guardian in awe, and Cyril stepped forward with a smirk.

"I don't know how you got to be the ancestors' favorite," Cyril said, looking at Ignitus, "but now is not one of the times I would complain about it."

"Indeed," Terrador said, looking over to Ignitus with a stern expression. "Had it not been for that vision you had, I would not have acted on the uneasy feeling *I* had."

Volteer nodded, though he could not help but glance back, a frown on his face, at the sight of the blazing fireball that was once their home. "Still… It's such a disheartening, unsure and frightful feeling knowing that our residence is no longer suitable for living."

"We can rebuild, Volteer," Ignitus said, looking back at the electric guardian. "The important thing is, this generation is safe for the time being. The dragonflies will take good care of them and, once things are finally safe, we can return them to the temple."

All the guardians nodded, Ignitus holding a triumphant smile on his face...

Spyro and Cynder stared on blankly at what used to be the swamplands. It now looked like a warzone, and thing that gobsmacked them the most was that it wasn't the Dark Armies who were responsible. In the mud of the swamp, a hoard of dragons all around the same age as Spyro and Cynder were shouting at each other, ramming into each other head-first, and accidentally catching trees on fire with their breath attacks. Spyro glanced back at the one tree in the forest that hadn't been burned down, the tree that Flash and Nina called home. Both dragonflies had dark bags under their eyes as they tried in vain to get the dragons to settle down.

"How the heck haven't Malefor's army already found this place?" Sparx asked, scratching the back of his head.

"Well…look on the bright side," Cynder said, a half-hearted smile on her face. "At least this generation of dragons survived the raid.

That's something, right?"

At that point, a loud cracking was heard behind them. The group of loopers looked back to see Flash and Nina panicking as their tree-home went up in flames, a nearby dragon rubbing his nose and taking a deep breath. Spyro sighed, placing a paw to his forehead.

' *While I'm glad that this is a possibility now,'* Spyro thought, a flat look in his eyes, *'I'm going to have to talk to Ignitus about a possible "plan B..." '*

Classic 34.9:

Spyro flew around the mines of Glimmer, using his flames to light the gems as he held an amused smirk on his face. Ripto had already been dealt with and it would be quite some time before the Sorceress came into the picture. In the meantime, Spyro thought he'd have a little fun. Looking down at the group of loopers gathered around, he grinned and lit the last gem.

The gems he had lit glowed brightly, their light rebounding off the giant gem in the middle and exploding in a purple flash, coating the cave in a purple hue as the occasional streak of multicolored light shot out. Landing on the ground, Spyro looked up at the higher ledges, where the stereo systems were strung about and the DJ stood behind the turntables. Giving a nod, the DJ put the needle on the record.

With a grin, the loopers began to dance the night away at the first annual Gem Cutter rave party.

Legend 34.10:

"You know, normally, right about now, I'd say something along the lines of 'can the loops get any crazier,' but…"

Spyro, who was blazing through the skies as fast as his wings would let him, shot Sparx a flat glance, trying his best to keep from smacking him.

' *Me and my big mouth!'* Spyro thought, shaking his head.

The loop had started out relatively the same as baseline, with the addition of Cynder escaping Malefor's clutches before becoming the Terror of the Skies, which was the norm for when she was awake. She'd wanted to take this loop off because of a previous stressful loop for her that had involved cameras, an art convention, different opinions on what 'true art' was, and a lot of people shouting 'OBJECTION' at the tops of their lungs, and Spyro had been more than willing to oblige.

Nothing much had changed from baseline, outside of Gaul taking over Cynder's role, which was more or less the norm for when Cynder was awake, up until he'd got to Dante's Freezer. Or, more specifically, when he was supposed to fight the Ice King. Rather than being confronted with the usual skeletal ice-elemental, he'd come face-to-face with what had to be the strangest being he had encountered in the loops so far.

He didn't challenge Spyro to a fight immediately, but that did little to lower Spyro's defences. Instead, they got to talking. The being had been rather delighted to have some company, but he hadn't seemed particularly 'all there,' either. Maybe it was the occasional odd comment about how he wanted 'a queen to his king,' or the awkward laugh that followed shortly after, but Spyro didn't exactly trust him. And that was when the king had asked if there were any princesses in these lands.

Spyro wasn't sure why he hadn't just shut him up then and there and continued on with baseline. Maybe it was his own general curiosity over the fact that, despite their loop's setting, he wasn't entirely sure if there *were* any princesses in the entire loop. If he had been smart, he would have made mention to the fact that there was an ape king

in his loop, but he doubted Gaul would have any children to speak of.

Yet, somehow, maybe because of some Freudian slip or some psychological thing like that, Spyro had had the bright idea to bring up Cynder. When asked if she was a princess, even though Cynder wasn't there to flatter, Spyro had let slip, "She's a princess to me."

And now he was seriously regretting that little compliment.

Frozen up to her neck in a solid chunk of ice, in which was engraved a dark gem that was steadily sapping her mana, Cynder let loose a very loud, *very* angry growl. The Ice King let out a somewhat dorky chuckle, flying through the air while carrying the frozen Cynder in his arms, a wide, goofy grin on his face.

"Oh, dragon princess!" the Ice King said, his grin only getting wider. "I promise to take good care of you! Come, let us journey off into the sunset together."

Had it not been for the fact that she couldn't move her head, she would have snapped the Ice King's large nose off his face.

"I keep telling you!" Cynder snarled, her eye twitching as she glared at her kidnapper. "How many times do I need to say it before it gets through your thick skull?! *I. Am. Not. A. PRINCESS!* "

"Simon!" exclaimed Fin the human, who was riding on Spyro's back and holding a fist in the air. "Let her go! She already has someone she's with!"

Spyro let out an annoyed sigh. Somehow, he got the feeling that she wouldn't be talking to 'the one she was already with' for several loops after this…

(A/N: Wooh! Filler chapter!

Not much to really say, other than the big elephant in the room one of these snips presented.

Now, I've gotten a lot of people asking about if Skylanders would have any impact on the Spyro loops. Needless to say, by the snip presented here…other than the characters occasionally popping up from time to time, no, we'll not be chronicling the Skylanders as its own loop.

The reason for this, besides the fact that a lot of us are unfamiliar with Skylanders, in addition to the rather loose characterization the Skylanders have—and thus a lot of the characters from there would likely have become OC stand-ins—Skylanders becoming its own loop just proved far too diverse on SB for it to ever happen. The second I brought up the idea, the Spyro loops thread became a warzone between those who were at the very least interested in seeing where it could go in terms of plot, and those who just flat out didn't want the universe looping, even if it wasn't going to be chronicled regardless. It was an uphill battle even getting a loop in that mentioned the universe was read-only, as quite a few didn't even want me to address that in an official snip.

In the end, this was the best compromise I could give to those who have been asking about it in the reviews. While they'll never be loopers, there's at least the chance a few could show up when required in certain loops, as has been the case so far.

With that out of the way, there's nothing more I really have to say about all this.

Loops:

34.1: Kentucky Fried Ed.

34.2: Grudges are kind of pointless in the looping verse. Admittedly, I was going to have Sparx slip in a line there about how the loops allow for some percussive therapy, and have him

reveal a picture of Cynder's evil adult form somehow dressed in a tu-tu, but the snip ended up being too 'daaaaw'-inducing to subvert like that.

34.3: ...On the plus side, the Professor now has an amazing new portable lab. Definitely going to be getting a lot of mileage out of this one. /shot

34.4: For those who don't get this: You have to have been on Space Battles on April Fools 2015. The day the toucan was staring into all our souls… :P

34.5: Join the 'baseline randomly likes to make us the opposite gender' club today! We have cookies! :D

34.6: You know, Spyro, you may have been able to pull the world back together in baseline, but I think you're in for some stiff competition when it comes to Earthbending this loop…

34.7: On the plus side, it's much easier than the normal way he fights her.

34.8: When you're presented with two options that are unsatisfactory, take a third one. And when that third one burns down your tree-home, take a fourth one.

34.9: Additionally, said gems can substitute for glow sticks.

34.10: The second I saw there was a boss in ANB called the Ice King, I knew this loop had to become a thing.

As always, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out and improve, and if you're interested in submitting your own snip to the compilation, take a look at the Spyro loops thread on Space Battles or check out the official Spyro loops FF.N Forum.)

Cold bonding

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx. Further comments at the end.)

Legend Loop 35.1: (TLoSxAvatar pt.3) (Feat: AbZ)

Spyro stepped lightly through the streets of Ba Sing Se. Somehow he had become a war hero of the Fire Nation, with the more embarrassing title of 'Rising Dragon.' How they'd settled on *that* particular moniker, he could only wonder. The Earth King had challenged him, supposedly betting the fate of the world on the outcome—well, more like the outcome of the siege, but...same thing, really. And, given the chance to end the fight with a contest of champions, Spyro couldn't say no. He knew very well it could be a trap, but...if he could save one more life this way, he'd do it.

The streets were startlingly empty as he walked to the center of the city. He couldn't feel anyone, even through his connection to the earth. Were they all hiding? Or had they all been gathered?

Also on his mind was Vaatu, the spirit of chaos and darkness, who also had the ability to overshadow or merge with a human to create the Dark Avatar. Did that count as previous version going crazy? ...Maybe half a check, then. Still, all in all, other than the human thing, it had been a pretty standard loop so far. If the Earth King's name was Malefor, he'd scream.

Spyro came to the entrance of what he could tell was a recently created amphitheater. Scoping out the potential battlefield with his connection to the ground, he noted that the Earth King, if there, was not alone. The only question remaining was whether they were reinforcements, hostages, spectators or a combination of all of the above. Keeping his breathing even, Spyro stepped through the entrance and into the center of the arena.

He heard a pretentious voice call out, "Welcome to you, the Rising Dragon! Savior of the Fire Nation! Despoiler of all that the Earth Kingdom holds dear! Ba Sing Se is graced by your presence!"

Turning to see a man shouting from the top of a large pillar, Spyro dully wondered if the man would still be able to pull off the same level of sarcasm if he was missing his right kidney.

"Ah, but now that I see you, Raava, Avatar, I see my understanding of your fame was correct! You are nothing and will die here!"

"Spyro," he murmured.

"What? You will have to speak up. I'm afraid the air up here is quite loud. But maybe you could do something about that, Raava."

"Spyro," Spyro repeated. "My name. It's Spyro, not Raava. You seem to be expecting me to be someone I'm not."

"Do not patronize me! You know me just as well as I know you, Raava!"

Shaking his head, Spyro replied, "Well, you are right that we know equal amounts of information. We are strangers and know nothing."

The man then stopped and began to laugh. "Don't tell me that you were unaware of who you are! Truly? Oh, this has just become almost pitifully easy! The only thing that stands in my way is a protector who hasn't even begun to learn what he can do! What did I do in a past life to be so *lucky* ?"

"Mistake me at your own peril," Spyro warned. "I came here to see this farce ended. If you keep trying to fight this Raava, this will be over quickly!"

The man cackled. "Oh, child, you know not the truth you speak." With that, the man bended the earth around Spyro, trying to crush him.

Spyro leapt up in reply, using the changing elevation to get closer to his opponent. Benders, for all that their method of manipulation doubled as a fighting style, seemed to move to their back foot when in melee range. The man began moving his body in a circle, and Spyro twisted in midair to avoid a blast of wind. This would be much more difficult if reading air currents wasn't something that came like breathing to him. Just because Cynder was the wind-aligned dragon didn't mean that Spyro or any of the others from his home-loop didn't know the air with the very marrow of their bones.

A spurt of fire propelled Spyro closer to his target. This time, the Earth King lashed out with a whip of water that he had drawn from the atmosphere. Spyro replied with a spear of lightning, forcing the man to jump away or lose control of his muscles and fall to a painful landing. He summoned a wave of earth to catch him and give him distance.

Spyro watched him hungrily, crouching from his perch. Then, at some unseen trigger, he pressed his hand against the side of the pillar, dug in, began channeling electricity, and launched himself at the ground.

'There is point A, there is point B; there is nothing in between.'

The man slightly trembled as the boy he was facing seemed to *become* lightning, an arc of electricity from the top of the pillar to the bottom. Pre-emptively, he called up the strongest barrier he could think of and found himself within a metal pyramid.

As Spyro's foot touched the ground, he noticed sheets of steel pulling themselves up between the Earth King and himself. They were fast. Not so fast that he couldn't strike, but enough that he wasn't sure he could get away after, and he had no desire to lock himself in a coffin with a corpse, for however little time that it would have been. Instead, he stepped just to the edge of the metal, then jerked to the side, purposefully raking his hands against the impromptu shield. The lightning in his hands shredded the metal to scrap, allowing Spyro a small window of visibility.

Stepping clear, he channeled his most potent offense into the heel of his foot and lashed it out in an arc. Nothing seemed to happen for a moment, then the pyramid launched a section of itself off in a vibrant bloom of red.

Spyro sighed as he watched the mess grow. He *had* warned him. And it was such a shame, too. He so rarely had a chance to be in a situation where he *could* enjoy the fight.

Classic Loop 35.2: (Sick Loop Finale)

The elderly dragon eyed his current client oddly. Over the years, he had sold houses to many a different client, including some with rather odd tastes. However, never before had he been in this sort of position. Looking at the small dragonfly in front of him, and then around at the large living room of the house he was attempting to buy, he couldn't help but raise an eye-ridge.

"Are you sure you want to buy this place?" the dragon asked, tilting his head. "Normally clients around your size prefer something a bit… smaller."

"Hey, what can I say?" Sparx said, smirking as he gave a shrug. "I like being able to spread my wings a little."

Ember had a bemused expression on her face as she walked down the hall, bottle of water in paw. She glanced towards the amused dragonfly buzzing next to her.

"I can't believe they actually let you buy this place," she said, raising an eye-ridge. "Weren't you born around the same time Spyro was?"

"Yeah," Sparx said, looking over to her. "But it goes without saying that dragonflies have a naturally shorter lifespan than most other creatures out there." He grinned before placing a hand to his chin.

"Spyro may be twelve in dragon years, but I'm like…twenty-two or so in dragonfly years."

"Twenty-two!?"

"I think," Sparx said, looking blankly at Ember. "Dragonfly age is screwy. All I know is I'm old enough to count as an adult… That is, even when not factoring in the loops."

"That's…" Ember paused, looking at him blankly. "I had no idea. Sparx, does that mean you…?"

"Oh, no, no, I'm not dying anytime soon. Again, not even factoring in the loops," Sparx said, crossing his arms with a smirk. "Being soul-bound to Spyro has its advantages. I likely won't die of anything natural until Spyro himself passes away, whenever that will be. Probably not anytime soon, given a dragon's lifespan."

He chuckled. "At least, that's *if* he doesn't do anything reckless once the loops finally end. Given how he is, though…"

The two shared a chuckle, but it was cut short by a low moan echoing down the hallway. Ember sighed and took a deep breath before she picked up the pace. Reaching one of the bedrooms, she paused and steadied herself before pushing the door open. Inside, Spyro lay weakly on the bed, a blanket covering his body as he let out several coughs.

"Ugh…my throat…" he muttered, taking a deep breath.

Ember flinched, but nonetheless slowly dragged her paws over to Spyro's bedside. Setting the water down on the nearby dresser, she backed away slowly.

"There's the water you asked for…" she said, glancing away awkwardly.

"Thanks…" Spyro muttered, slowly reaching up to it.

Taking the bottle of water and using whatever energy he had left to sit up straight, Spyro unscrewed the cap and took a drink. After doing so, he recapped the bottle and looked forward blankly, taking deep breaths. Seconds later, he let out a sneeze, which was quickly followed by a meek 'eek!' from Ember. Whipping out a can of disinfectant spray, she began spraying it around the room, causing Spyro to cough again when he breathed some of it in.

"Embs, please…" he said, placing a paw to his head. "That stuff's making my throat hurt."

"Sorry, Spyro!" Ember said, walking around the room and spraying every nook and cranny. "I just want to make absolutely sure there's no germs floating around here." She looked back, her facemask curling just enough to show she was frowning underneath it. "I warned you I don't handle colds well, so I don't want to get sick myself, if at all possible."

"Well, then can you at least save this room for last?" Spyro asked, a frown on his face. "I don't like being sick, either, and this isn't helping."

"Trust me, Spyro! I know a lot about how to cure colds quickly!" Ember said, taking out a disinfectant wipe and scrubbing down a table. "I work in a nursery where there always seems to be at least *one* youngling sick during any given month, and being easily able to catch a cold myself…"

Spyro sighed before glancing over to Sparx with a frown. Sparx held an amused smirk, placing a hand on his chin.

"Hey, you're the one who didn't want to be put through the elders' home remedies," Sparx whispered, grin growing wider.

Spyro's expression went flat and he glared at Sparx, who chuckled before shaking his head.

"Alright, alright," Sparx whispered, looking over towards Ember. "Hey, Ember."

Ember paused and glanced back, still holding the disinfectant wipe firmly against the stand. Sparx did his best to keep from chuckling as he flew over to her.

"I don't think Spyro's eaten all day, now that I think about it, and since he's in no condition to make anything himself…" Sparx gave a quick glance back towards Spyro. "I think I saw some cans of chicken soup back in the kitchen. I'd make it for him myself, but uh…" He held his hands out in front of him, a sheepish grin on his face. "I don't think I'd be able to even lift the can."

"Some soup would be nice…" Spyro muttered, slowly leaning back into the bed.

"Okay," Ember said, giving a nod as she quickly finishing scrubbing the stand. "Chicken soup is pretty good for you when you're sick, too."

With that, she headed to the doorway, tossing the wipe towards a nearby garbage can as she left the room. Sparx quickly flew after her, only turning back for a few seconds to see Spyro mouth 'thank you.' Sparx chuckled, shaking his head as he quickly headed after Ember.

Sparx watched with amusement as Ember took the bowl of soup out of the microwave, putting it on a tray and taking off the mitts she was wearing.

"I know it's just canned chicken soup," Sparx said, flying over with an amused expression, "but the fact that you didn't cause it to spontaneously combust like your loop sister did already makes you a better cook in my eyes."

Ember chuckled and looked over to Sparx as she picked the tray up in her paws, slowly getting onto her hind legs.

"Well, considering that—and how the one time I saw Hunter try to cook, he ended up with singed fur—I figure at least *one* of us loopers should know how to, even if it's just basic stuff like this," she said, slowly making her way out of the kitchen.

Sparx flew over next to her, an amused look on his face. "Didn't know you could walk on your hind legs. When did that happen?"

"You can say I had to learn during a loop when I looped in as a human," Ember said, looking over with a smirk. "I still prefer walking on all fours, but a human walking on her hands and knees raises a few eyebrows."

"I would think so," Sparx said, smirking. "Then again, I would think a dragon walking around in a loop where there's normally no dragons would raise even more eyebrows."

"True," Ember said, giving a grin. "Part of the reason I still haven't asked if Spyro has discovered any spell to shapeshift for loops like that."

"Pfft, he'd be more willing to search out a spell that would make everyone who looks at him treat him like he's a celeb for a loop than anything practical like that," Sparx replied, waving a hand nonchalantly in the air.

"Come on, now," Ember said, looking over to Sparx with a raised eye-ridge. "He may enjoy being a hero and all, but he can't be that egotistical."

Sparx smirked, placing a hand to his chin. "Please. Half of mine and Hunter's theories for why you started looping as quickly as you did boil down to you being Spyro's first personal fangirl."

"Probably…" Ember muttered, glancing down at the soup on the tray. "Honestly, I'm kind of embarrassed at how my unawake self acts in baseline…"

"Don't worry, Ember, from what I understand, nearly every single looper feels that way," Sparx said, fluttering over and placing a hand on Ember's shoulder. "I'm sure, soon enough, even Spyro and I will end up feeling that way about our unawake selves. I know I'm not particularly happy with how I apparently acted during Red's experiments with the dark gems...even if that had to do more with the gems themselves."

Ember paused before she glanced over to Sparx with a small smile on her face.

"I suppose that's true. Still, the dark gems can apparently be countered somehow, from what the Professor has said, and I have no idea how Spyro could ever regret being a hero," Ember said, continuing up the stairs. "I'm still surprised that his parents let him do all that after the Gnasty Gnorc incident. *That* I can understand, because he was the only one who could stop Gnasty at the time, but afterwards...I'm surprised they had no objections to his other adventures."

"Well…he would kind of need parents to object to that stuff in the first place."

"Wait, what?" Ember paused at the top of the steps to glance over to Sparx. "Are you saying…Spyro doesn't have any parents?"

"As far as he and I know," Sparx said, giving a shrug. "As far back as we can remember, Spyro has always been—rather loosely, mind you—raised by the Artisans as a community." He flew ahead, placing his hands behind his back. "We're not entirely sure why. I think it may have been because he was an 'unplanned miracle' for a dragon couple who were exactly at the age where it's generally considered acceptable to have a youngling, or weren't ready to raise a child of their own."

Sparx glanced back, an awkward smile on his face as he attempted to break the tension. "Spyro thinks it's because dragons pick the eggs when the fairies deliver them from wherever, and that he

managed to prove so capable off the bat that the elders realized he didn't need parents to take care of him."

Ember blinked, tilting her head at Sparx's explanation. With a frown, she glanced down at the soup. "I can't believe Spyro doesn't have any parents…"

"Eh, don't worry about him," Sparx said, waving his hand nonchalantly. "The Artisans as a whole may not be able to watch him twenty-four seven, but they do what they can. And, of course, he always has yours truly to watch his back well." Sparx smirked as he crossed his arms.

"Still…is he alright with that?" Ember asked, looking at Sparx with a frown. "I mean, I can't even imagine what that's like, not having parents…"

"Please. This is Spyro we're talking about here," Sparx said, giving a grin. "If anything—and these are his words, not mine—he loves the fact that he doesn't have dragons constantly setting rules for him all the time."

"But parents only set rules because they care," Ember said, raising an eye-ridge. "Besides, there's still the fact that it's nice to know that your parents care for you. I have seen orphaned younglings at the day-care before and…" Ember bit her lower lip, glancing away as she took a deep breath, "...to say they're depressed about it would be a pretty big understatement."

"Again, this is *Spyro* we're talking about here," Sparx said, shaking his head. "I'm not even sure if depression is a word in his vocabulary. There's anger, annoyance and snark, but I don't think I've ever seen Spyro flat-out depressed before."

"Some people are good at masking that kind of stuff, Sparx," Ember said, looking at him flatly. "For all we know, he could be pretty busted up about this, but doesn't show it around others."

"Eh, either way…" Sparx gave a shrug. "Probably best you don't bring it up with him. He'll likely tell you the same thing I did, on top of the fact that he hates being pitied."

There was concern deep in Ember's eyes as she narrowed them at Sparx. Slowly, she began pushing the thought to the back of her mind as she headed down the hallway. Arriving at Spyro's room, she slid the mask back over her mouth and entered. Spyro lay on the bed, his gaze drifting slowly around the room.

"You know, this is actually a pretty nice house…" he muttered, glancing at the duo walking over to his bed. "Maybe we should consider making this sort of a 'looper clubhouse' or something, where loopers can stay so they don't have to sleep outside or something like that, depending on how they loop into our world."

Ember bit her lower lip, glancing over to Sparx. Sparx gave her a discreet glare before pretending to sneeze. Holding his arm to his nose, he quickly shook his head back and forth.

Ember blinked, frowning under her mask, before turning back to Spyro.

"That sounds great, Spyro," she said, giving him a soft look as she set the tray on his lap. "It would also be a good place for us to spend a loop should something happen." Ember cleared her throat, trying her best to keep her voice from faltering. "Like, say, for whatever reason, we don't have a solid place to spend the night for the loop and such…"

Sparx turned around, face-palming. Giving a sigh, he turned back and gave Ember a glare before shaking his head.

"...It could also be a good place to spend a loop hiding out in if we need to do so for whatever reason," Sparx said, looking back up at Spyro with a half-hearted smile.

"Sounds good to me, then!" Spyro said, slowly sitting up straighter, making sure not to spill his soup. "Not like gems are particularly hard to come by anymore."

He quickly took the spoon in the bowl and began to eat the soup. Ember watched on as he did so, a frown hidden under her mask and a glint of concern in her eyes.

"...Spyro?"

Spyro glanced over to Ember as he swallowed a mouthful of soup, an eye-ridge arched and a confused glint in his eyes.

"What?" he asked, tilting his head.

"What is it like living in the Artisan Realm?" Ember asked, glancing down. "I've never really spent a large amount of time away from Dragon Village. The only time I did was during the loop where we swapped roles, and…" Ember bit her lip, kicking herself for not realizing all of this earlier. "I guess you could say I wasn't really paying attention to the smaller details."

"What brought that on?" Spyro asked, staring at Ember blankly.

"Just…curious, I guess," she said, averting her eyes from his.

Sparx let out a breathless sigh, closing his eyes as he took a deep breath. Spyro looked on with a confused expression before glancing back to Ember.

"It's a pretty nice place. Open green hills as far as the eye can see, huge castles and the like, and it's pretty much always the perfect temperature. Not too hot, not too cold, but warm enough with the occasional breeze to cool the air so it never becomes annoying," Spyro said, glancing back down at his bowl and beginning to eat.

"That…that was surprisingly descriptive for you, Spyro," Sparx said, blinking as he looked down at Spyro.

"Really?" Spyro asked, glancing up at Sparx. A small smirk on his face, he looked down at his bowl of soup. "This cold must be getting to me more than I thought."

"Come on now, give yourself some credit," Ember said, smiling under her mask. "You are an Artisan after all, right? Isn't stuff like that in your blood?"

"Well… I don't know," Spyro said, crossing his arms as he looked down with a stern look on his face. "I really don't think I *am* a natural Artisan, to be honest."

"What makes you say that?" Ember asked, raising an eye-ridge. "Isn't that where you grew up?"

"Yeah, but I don't think that means I'm an Artisan by blood. I honestly don't get a lot of the 'fancy' things that Artisans do, and I'm not exactly all that great at drawing, sculpting, writing…or really *any* artsy things like that." He glanced over to Ember. "If anything, I think I'm like a Magic Crafter, Dream Weaver hybrid, considering how quickly I picked up both magic and dream-walking once we started looping."

Spyro smirked before picking the bowl up and sucking down the last bit of soup, then placing the empty bowl on the stand.

"Ironic," he said, wiping some soup off his chin, "considering they're generally the weakest dragons physically, and I managed to get through most of my adventures through brute strength."

"Spyro," Ember said, sitting on her hind legs as she crossed her forelegs, "you know that's just a stereotype the other dragons put on them. That doesn't make it true."

"I know, I know, I'm sorry," Spyro said, quickly raising his paws up in front of him with a sheepish grin. "I just thought it was a funny thought, is all."

Ember frowned under her mask before shaking her head. Sighing, she glanced back up at Spyro.

"I'm sorry," she said, putting all four of her paws back on the ground. "It's just...I'm part Magic Crafter and I guess I'm still a bit sensitive over the idea of being considered weak…"

"You're part Magic Crafter?" Spyro asked, raising an eye-ridge.

"Yeah," Ember said, a smile forming under her mask. "On my dad's side. Didn't I tell you?"

"No…but I guess it makes sense considering how quickly you picked up the magic I taught you," Spyro said, looking on blankly. Giving a slight groan, he slid back into his bed, a frown on his face. "I'm really sorry about that, Embs… I honestly had no idea."

"It's alright," Ember said, shaking her head. "I was being a bit oversensitive. I already proved that Magic Crafters aren't weak in that loop with your loop-brother and Cynder, so…"

She chuckled, giving a wink. "Though, I suppose having some Peace Keeper blood in me also helps."

"You're part Peace Keeper, too?" Spyro asked, raising back up with a confused look on his face.

"Yeah. Well, that or part Beast Maker," Ember said, smirking under her mask. "Or possibly Artisan. I don't know."

Spyro raised an eye-ridge, looking blankly at Ember as she giggled to herself.

"The loops can't seem to make up their mind," she finally said, an amused look in her eyes. "Mostly because it can't make up its mind over what type of dragon my mom is. She always seems to rotate between the dragon classes every other loop, which results in *my* secondary type rotating on a whim."

Ember shook her head, raising a claw that sparkled with the faintest glow of magic. "All I know at this point is that Magic Crafter is the only dragon type that seems to be mostly constant with me, so I just really consider myself a Magic Crafter because of that."

She lowered her paw, glancing upward with an amused look in her eyes. "And even *that* has a tendency to change from loop to loop, too." She looked back down at Spyro. "I honestly don't know *which* of the dragon types I originally was anymore. So, I guess you can say that I'm not sure if I'm the type I think I am, either."

Spyro looked on in wide-eyed shock, staring blankly at Ember. She seemed perfectly fine despite she had just told him.

"Jeez, Embs, that sounds insane," he said, leaning forward as best he could. "You okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," Ember said, quickly raising a paw in front of her. "I mean, even if what type of dragon I am changes on a whim, I'm still me deep down, and I know who I am in terms of my personality and general background in regards to my family. It's not like some horror stories I've heard, where loopers have completely different personalities, backgrounds, family members and even powers from loop to loop."

"Like, there's this one looper I heard about, I think her name was April 'O…something or other," Ember said, frowning under her mask as she glanced downward. "She apparently has no less than *ten* different roles she loops into from loop to loop, and in each of them her unawake self has vastly different personalities and backgrounds. From what I heard, the poor thing is extremely messed up because of it, and she honestly has no clue who the *real* her is anymore."

"Holy crap," Spyro said, blinking as he tilted his head. "I can't even begin to imagine what that's like."

"I know," Ember said, shaking her head. "Even though my typing may change from loop to loop, my background and family generally

stays the same. Sometimes Flame is my cousin, sometimes he isn't related to me at all, or I may have a different father on occasion…" She looked back at Spyro with a melancholic look in her eyes. "But it's constant enough to know that I am Ember Shoutfire, daughter of Edna Shoutfire, who lives in Dragon Village."

"Well, that's good, then," Spyro said, a smile on his face. "At least there's no having to worry about that."

"Yeah," Ember said, looking up with a smirk. "And, if anything, the constant type-changing is giving me a good grasp on the many different abilities each dragon class has."

"Really?" Spyro asked, a smirk on his face as he raised an eyebrow. "Like what?"

"Well, besides magic and chi…" Ember placed a claw to her chin. "I'm slowly starting to learn how Beast Makers create the creatures of the realms."

"Really?" Spyro asked, a curious glint in his eyes. "Mind showing me? I was actually kind of curious about how they do that myself."

"Well... " Ember looked at Spyro a little apprehensively. "...I suppose so. Keep in mind, though, I haven't exactly got it down pat yet."

She took a deep breath, raising her forepaws in front of her as she closed her eyes. Concentrating, her body began to glow a deep purple and a glowing sphere of light began to form between her paws. The air around her becoming thick, a breeze began to circle the room, causing the curtains and Spyro's blanket to rustle. Before long, her eyes shot open, glowing with a blue tint as, in a flash of light, the ball appeared to explode. Spyro quickly covered his eyes, letting out a grunt.

Soon after, he felt something standing on his bed. Slowly reopening his eyes, he saw what appeared to be a small, armless bunny looking at him. The bunny hopped forward, landing on Spyro's

stomach and eying him curiously. Ember took several deep breaths, leaning against Spyro's bed. Blinking, she stumbled back in a daze.

"That's amazing!" Spyro said, looking at the bunny with wide eyes.

"Thank you," Ember said, her voice fluctuating as her eyes spun in her head. "Yes, I was told fire-water socks were all the rage this year."

Spyro looked up from the bunny, staring blankly as Ember stumbled about.

"Ember?" he asked, raising an eye-ridge. "You okay?"

She shook her head, quickly holding it in her paws as the world seemed to spin around her. Taking a deep breath, she placed her paws back on the ground.

"Y-yeah," she said, slowly making her way back over to the bed. "Understandably, making a living creature from scratch using magic takes a lot out of the user…" Resting against the bedside, she gave a small smile. "As of right now, this is the best I can do without risking a trip to the hospital."

Spyro looked on in amusement at the armless rabbit before it suddenly paused. Blinking, the rabbit began to wobble, its eyes going dull, before it collapsed on Spyro's bed. Spyro blinked, watching it disappear in a puff of smoke and release a tiny butterfly. Seeing this, Sparx smirked.

"Ah, sweet! Thanks!" he said, quickly darting forward.

As the butterfly fled at the sight of a hungry dragonfly coming after it, Spyro gave Sparx a glare as he darted off. Ember chuckled, shaking her head.

"They also don't last for very long before turning into magic butterflies, unlike some of the ones created by professional Beast

Makers, which have something resembling a normal lifespan," Ember said, a smirk on her face. "So, sorry, but it'll be until a long while before I can go riding into battle on some giant fire-breathing aardvark thing."

Both Ember and Spyro laughed at the comment, though it didn't take long before Spyro's laughter turned into a coughing fit. Ember flinched and quickly shuffled back. As the fit began to subside, Spyro took a deep breath, laying down in the bed with a frown.

"I really hope this doesn't last much longer," he muttered, narrowing his eyes as he let out a low moan. "Why isn't there some spell that can cure colds…? I mean, if it can cure giant gashes and broken bones..."

"Apparently, something to do with bacteria inside a dragon's body being harder to deal with using magic or…something," Ember said, glancing downward. "Part of the reason I'm in this getup in the first place is because of it. I've… I always seem to get sick more easily than others, so…"

"I didn't know that." Spyro paused, looking at Ember with a blank glance, a frown slowly forming on his face. Raising back up, he cleared his throat before looking back at Ember. "You know, if you want, you can leave and do whatever you want for the rest of the loop. I'll probably be good now that I have some place to hide from the elders. Had I had known that…"

"No, no, it's fine," Ember said, raising a paw in the air. "I want to make sure you're okay. Besides, I've been meaning to get over this germaphobia I've developed for a while now…"

She cleared her throat, looking back up at Spyro. A rather forced smile under her mask, she took a few steps forward.

"Anyways, like I asked earlier…" she said, standing next to Spyro's bed. "How is it living in the Artisan Realm? Do the elders give you a hard time and all?"

"Eh, not really," Spyro said, sliding back down into his bed. "The only thing that really bugs me is that they wanted me to originally be a sheep herder. I mean, really." He looked over to Ember with a raised eye-ridge. "Could you imagine *me* living the life of a sheep herder?"

"To be fair," Ember said, suppressing a giggle, "you hadn't done anything noteworthy like beating Gnasty Gnorc yet."

"Yeah, but still…" Spyro said, shaking his head. "I'm honestly more cut out for being a Peace Keeper, despite my possible Magic Crafter, Dream Weaver mixed heritage and all. I'm surprised they didn't notice that."

"They probably just didn't want you to get hurt, is all," Ember said, placing her forepaws on the bed. "I mean, the elders care for all young dragons and, from what I remember during my loop there, I was...or rather, you were the only young dragon there."

"Eh, I just think they didn't want to do it themselves," Spyro said, yawning as his eyelids began to droop, drowsily staring off into space as he pulled the blanket up to his neck. "They really don't pay attention to me too much, at least not before Gnasty Gnorc. Can't really complain, though, since it allows me to sneak off and do whatever I want in the loops, but it's nice having them treat me like a hero..."

Ember flinched, watching as Spyro closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. A frown on her face, she raised a paw over her mouth. Without a moment's hesitation, she lent forward and pulled him into a hug. Spyro's eyes shot open, a blank expression on his face, blinking as he glanced down at her.

"Uh…Ember?" he asked, a slowly growing frown on his face. "What are you doing?"

Ember sighed, slowly pulling away as she shook her head. "Sorry," she said, glancing towards Spyro with glint of sympathy in her eyes. "I just want you to feel better, is all..."

Spyro raised an eye-ridge before slowly sliding back down into his bed, never taking his eyes off the dragoness. "Thanks, but…I don't think that's going to help."

Ember took a deep breath, closing her eyes as her frown remained hidden under her mask. "I suppose. With all you have to go through, I just felt like you could have used it."

With that, Ember turned to the door, slowly making her way out of the room. Pausing, she glanced back with a small smile on her face.

"In any case, try to get some rest," she said, a concerned look in her eyes. "And remember, your friends are always here for you when you need us."

With that, Ember left the room, leaving behind a very confused purple dragon. Spyro tilted his head, looking towards the door, before finally giving a sigh and letting his head sink into the pillows. He drowsily held his eyes open, watching as Sparx flew towards him, a content smile on his face.

"What do you know, Ember's a good cook even when she's not intending to cook something," Sparx said, grinning as he came to a rest on the stand.

Spyro chuckled, but quickly subdued it as he glanced towards his best friend.

"Hey, Sparx," Spyro said, raising an eye-ridge. "Does something about Ember seem odd to you? I mean, other than the Ms. Clean thing she has going on."

Sparx glanced to the side, a sheepish grin on his face as he let out an awkward chuckle. "Uh, w-what do you mean?"

"Well, just a few seconds ago she was asking me what the Artisan Realm was like despite already going through a loop there, then she asked me how the elders there treat me, and then she gave me a

hug," Spyro said, slowly raising up in his bed. "But it wasn't like a 'super fangirl mode' hug. It was more like… I don't know, like she felt bad for me for some reason."

"Well, uh…" Sparx said, scratching the back of his head. "That…that might have to do with the fact that I—accidentally, mind you—let slip that you don't exactly know who your parents are…"

"Wha—Sparx!" Spyro said, shooting up in bed as he narrowed his eyes at the dragonfly.

"I'm sorry, Spyro! How was I supposed to know she would make a big deal out of it!?" Sparx said, quickly flying up into the air and out of swatting range.

Spyro let out a groan, sliding back into the bad as he closed his eyes. Taking a deep breath, he shook his head and rolled onto his side. If it had been anyone but Ember, he wouldn't have minded, but Ember was always one to make a big fuss over something small. Spyro sighed. The next couple of loops were going to be interesting, especially if he was to convince Ember that he was perfectly okay without having parents. Sure, it would have been *nice* to know who they were, but it wasn't something he needed to be babied for.

In any case, that was for another time and another loop. Right now, his head was pounding and all he wanted was to get some sleep…

Before sleep could fully overtake him, Spyro heard a sneeze echo out from the hallway, followed by a solemn moan. He raised his head, looking on blankly, before he finally placed a paw to his chin, a sheepish grin on his face.

A low moan echoed out through the bedroom as Ember stirred from her sleep, eyes barely opened, her head pounding. Moaning, she rolled onto her back, looking up at the ceiling with a miserable look in her eyes. Hearing a faint knocking at the door to the bedroom, she

raised up, looking forward as the door slowly opened, revealing another dragon in a face mask and apron.

"Ember, sweetie…" Edna said, poking her head around the door. "There's someone here to see you."

Ember merely coughed in response, picking up a tissue on the stand next to her bed and blowing her snore, red nose. Glancing back towards the door, she blinked as a purple dragon and his dragonfly companion slowly crept into the room. Spyro had a sheepish grin on his face and was carrying a gift basket with a rather shoddily-drawn 'get well' card stuck to the front of it. Ember couldn't help but chuckle at the sight, managing to grin despite feeling like any energy she'd had was drained from her body.

"Uh, hey Embs," Spyro muttered, quickly setting the gift basket on the table.

"Hello, Spyro," Ember said, sounding cheery despite the rasp to her voice.

"Uh…" Spyro scratched the back of his neck as he glanced away. "Sorry about the whole getting you sick thing. Again, if I had known you catch colds easier than other dragons…"

Ember shook her head, an amused smile on her face as she looked at Spyro. "It's alright. I pretty much knew I was going to get sick the second I agreed to help you get over your cold."

"Yeah… Again, sorry about that," Spyro said, awkwardly glancing forward with a sheepish grin on his face.

Sparx looked on at the bedridden dragoness, her puffy eyes and runny nose making him flinch.

"Jeez," he said, raising a hand in front of his face. "You look worse than Spyro when he was sick."

Spyro let out a low growl, glaring at Sparx from the corner of his eye. Ember giggled at the sight, slowly raising up and looking at them both.

"Yeah… In addition to the fact that I get sick easier than most, I also don't handle colds very well," she said, clearing her throat as she rubbed her eyes. "No one in my family is really good at handling colds, which I'm sure was made apparent when you saw how my mom was dressed."

"Eh…yeah, I kind of got that when I saw her," Spyro said, glancing towards the doorway. Looking back at Ember, he frowned. "You sure you're going to be okay?"

"I'm sure," Ember said, sliding down into her bed. "I just need some rest, is all."

Spyro paused, looking at Ember with concern in his eyes as she pulled the blanket up over herself. He slowly stood up, turning towards the door, but never taking an eye off her. Taking a step, he paused before turning around and looking fully at her.

"Uh, Ember," he said, a sheepish look about him. "I realize this probably isn't the best time, but… Sparx told me he told you something he wasn't supposed to."

Ember raised her head, looking towards Spyro with a blank glance. Taking a deep breath, she sat up, frowning at him. She went to open her mouth, but Spyro quickly held his paw up.

"I'm fine not having parents. It doesn't bug me," he said, shaking his head. "I'd be lying if I said I'm not curious about what they look like, but it doesn't bug me not having them around." He smirked, placing his paws on the bed. "If anything, I'm kind of glad I don't. It allows me a lot of freedom in the loops, and even before the loops. Do you honestly think if I had parents, they would have allowed me to do half the cool stuff I've done?"

Sparx smirked, floating over to Ember with his arms crossed and muttering 'I told ya' in her ear before heading back over to Spyro. Nonetheless, the frown remained on Ember's face as she looked at Spyro with a concerned glint in her eyes.

"Still…" she said, giving a sigh, "it bugs me that you don't. I don't know why, maybe because I'm not entirely sure what that feels like, but…"

"Ember," Spyro said, frowning as he narrowed his eyes, "I don't like being pitied, especially for something that doesn't bug me."

"I can't help it," Ember said, slowly sliding back down in her bed. "You're my best friend. The idea that you're spending most nights out in the cold without anyone to care for you…" She closed her eyes, resting her head on her pillows.

"I don't know, I kind of like being able to look at the stars while I fall asleep," Spyro said, a cheeky grin on his face. "And it's not like the Artisan Realm gets super cold at night, either, so…"

"Spyro," Ember said, looking at him with a flat glance.

Spyro chuckled, quickly shaking his head and letting out a sigh.

"Alright, alright…" he said, looking up at her with a smile. "If it'll make you feel any better, in addition to letting loopers stay there, I'll also make that place my house in the loops. That way I have a roof over my head at night." He gave a smirk. "That good?"

Ember looked at him with a blank look in her eyes. Taking a deep breath, she glanced down, a slight smile on her face.

"Yeah…" she said, looking back up at Spyro. "Just remember, though… We're all here for you if you need us."

"Yeah, I know," Spyro said, grinning as he scratched the back of his head. "I admit, I'm a bit dense, but I realized that even before the

loops started, so no need to worry about that."

"Good," Ember said, a smile on her sickly face as she slid back down into bed, a contented sigh finding its way through the oppression that was her cold.

Spyro smirked, raising an eye-ridge as said smirk slowly turned into a grin.

"So…" he said, taking his paws off the bed. "...I'm your best friend, huh?"

"Well, of course!" Ember said, giving a smile as she glanced at him. "I mean, it's not like I know any other dragons around our in-loop age. There's Flame, but even when he isn't my brother…I still wouldn't see him as my best friend, even if I had no knowledge that he was my brother in the loops."

She chuckled, watching as Spyro crossed his forelegs with a smirk.

"So, I'm your best friend by process of elimination," Spyro said, raising an eye-ridge as he did his best to suppress a chuckle. "Gee. I feel so honored."

"Oh, come on, Spyro," Ember said, rolling her eyes with a smirk. "Even if I knew more dragons around our age, you'd still be at the top."

"Well, that's good to know," Spyro said, grinning as he placed his paws on the bed again. "I mean, I would be some pretty stiff competition for the rest of your friends, so…"

Both dragons broke out into a fit of laughter that reverberated through the halls. Even though it was one they enjoyed, it was quickly broken by Ember subsiding into a coughing fit. As she held a tissue over her mouth, Spyro watched with concern, an increasingly growing frown on his face. As Ember's coughs finally started to ease, she blew her nose and let out a miserable groan.

Spyro slumped at the sight, watching as she fidgeted in her bed. Taking a deep breath, he quickly sat back up, a kind smile on his face as he moved a bit closer towards Ember.

"Hey, Embs," he said, placing a paw on her shoulder. "Anything I can do to help? Like, you need more tissues or water or stuff like that?"

"Oh, no, no. I'm fine, really," Ember said, raising a paw. "I just need some rest, is all. You can spend the rest of the loop doing whatever you want."

"Please, Embs," Spyro said, giving a small grin. "It's the least I can do after you helped me get over *my* cold."

Ember paused, blankly noting the kind look on Spyro's face. Raising a paw to her chin, she glanced up at the ceiling.

"Well…it would be nice if you could help my mom with some things," she said, looking back at Spyro with a smile. "I mean, you've seen how I help take care of others with colds, and considering she's the one I learned that from…"

"Say no more," Spyro said, raising a paw with a smirk. "Don't worry. I'll make sure she doesn't try to bathe you in disinfectant sprays or anything."

"Thanks," Ember said, a slight chuckle escaping her lips.

Spyro grinned, placing his paws back on the ground. "No problem."

With that, he turned away and started heading out the door. Giving a grin, Sparx was quick to follow, looking down at Spyro as he crossed his arms.

"You realize you're probably going to catch the cold you gave her again, right?" Sparx asked, raising an eyebrow.

"You can't catch the same cold twice, Sparx," Spyro said, looking at him with narrowed eyes. "Your body builds up an immunity to it so

you can't catch it again."

"That's just chickenpox, Spyro," Sparx said, rolling his eyes. "That doesn't go for *all* colds."

"Yes, it does."

"No, it doesn't."

"Yes, it *does.* "

"No, it *doesn't.* "

Ember chuckled, hearing Spyro and Sparx argue all the way down the hall. Giving a contented sigh, she snuggled into her bed, closing her eyes as she let her exhaustion get the better of her. She hated being sick, but, somehow, she got the feel that this time was going to be a bit more entertaining than the last few times...

Legend Loop 35.3:

Spyro landed on the shores of Boyzitbig, looking up at the red sky with a raised eye-ridge. Something about this place felt odd this loop. The whole time he'd been flying there, he hadn't been able to shake that feeling. For starters, there were no catapults throwing flaming projectiles in an attempt to shoot him down before he got there, and nary a sign of *any* of Malefor's army at all.

What unnerved him the most, though, was the fact that he hadn't seen tail nor scale of Cynder this loop. Spyro let out an annoyed grunt, looking down at himself with a scowl on his face. It was taking far too long to build up and strengthen his magical reserves. Bemoaning how Classic seemed like such a natural at magic—and how he himself had nearly killed himself with a simple teleport spell several times—Spyro shook his head. He'd have to put those worries behind him for now. For the moment, he had a loop to investigate.

He'd hardly taken a few steps up the shore when Sparx quickly flew forward, a smirk on his face.

"Aw yeah. Time to put this loop's master plan into action!" Sparx said, turning around with a grin. "I've been keeping so many fireworks in my subspace I was worried that, as soon as I opened it, I'd be bombarded by a massive explosion."

"You know, because fireworks and active volcanos go so great together," Spyro said, raising an eye-ridge as an amused smile found its way onto his face.

"When you're trying to make the best firework show in the realms, it does," Sparx said, crossing his arms with a smirk.

"Well, in any case, can you please hold that off until the next loop?" Spyro asked, glancing around with a frown. "I mean, surely you've noticed the lack of a Dark Army? Especially considering this is their main forge…"

Sparx paused, glancing around at the unusual calmness that surrounded them. Scratching the back of his head, he turned towards the cave.

"You know, now that you mention it…" Sparx said, turning back around with a frown. "Where the heck is everyone!? A fireworks display is no good if there's no audience to see it."

Spyro gave Sparx a flat look before taking a few steps towards the cave. It was an eerie feeling, being at this place when it was so empty. Maybe it was the fact that there was a peaceful place in his baseline at all that unnerved him, but…

It was then that he heard a shrieking roar. Quickly looking back, he saw the form of Dark Cynder growing in the distance. Sparx smirked, flying next to Spyro.

"Ah, there we go," Sparx said, a grin on his face. "Finally an audience. Think a fireworks show is just what she needs to escape her dark form?"

Spyro gave Sparx a cold look and the dragonfly pouted as he turned away.

"Jeez, lighten up," Sparx said, crossing his arms. "Not like it was going to hurt her or anything. Just…maybe singe a few scales."

Spyro shook his head before looking back up at the sky as Cynder slowly drew closer. He raised an eye-ridge. Cynder wasn't supposed to be there yet, especially since he'd decided to speed things up a bit this loop. What was making her head this way? And why hadn't he seen her for the entire loop so far?

Spyro blinked as Cynder came further into view, revealing she was fully plated in battle armor. He let out a slight grunt. Hopefully that wouldn't interfere with him freeing her. Then his eyes shot wide open as he saw what was following her. Behind Cynder was an armada of airships, each loading their cannons as they drew close to Boyzitbig.

"I don't care if you have to level the entire damn volcano!" Cynder proclaimed, looking back at the armada. "We must reclaim this land in the Dark Master's name! So help me, if those moles get the better of you again…!"

Spyro tilted his head. Reclaim it? What did she mean by…?

That was when the ground began to shake. Spyro braced against a wall as he glanced every which way. An earthquake? Was Terrador incredibly overpowered this loop? Was that why they'd brought an entire army to reclaim this land?

"Spyro! The volcano!"

Spyro's gaze shot towards Boyzitbig at Sparx's insistence. Wings flared and ready for the possibility of the volcano blowing, his eyes

shot open at the sight.

Slowly, the 'volcano' began to part, stone crumbling from its sides as metal pushed through, steel girders keeping the two sides of the mountain from falling apart. Slowly, a giant mechanical cylinder raised from Boyzitbig's depths, glowing wires strung across it. As the cylinder reached its highest point, it slid into a horizontal stance like a cannon firmly aimed at the approaching Dark Armies.

Spyro's jaw dropped before the ground shook again. Glancing around, he saw several more, far smaller cannons beginning to protrude from various places around the island, all squarely aimed at the armada in the air.

Cynder watched it all with wide eyes, her jaw dropping as the cannons began to glow.

Seconds later, the skies of Boyzitbig lit up in light show of red energy bursts and exploding airships.

"Nnnngh…"

Cynder opened her eyes, vaguely aware that her body was significantly smaller than it had been before, as the blurry image of a purple something standing over her came into view. Spyro looked down at her with increasing worry in his eyes as he reached a paw out.

"H-hey," he said, afraid to touch the battered and bruised dragoness lest he risk accidentally breaking a fractured bone. "Are you okay?"

"Where am I…?" Cynder moaned, her voice fluctuating as her eyes rolled in her head. Then, just as quickly as she'd come to, she promptly passed out once again, her head going limp on the ground.

Sparx blinked, scratching the back of his head, before glancing over to Spyro with a half-hearted grin.

"Well, if nothing else," Sparx said, raising an open palm towards Spyro, "we now know advanced firepower works just as well at curing Cyndy as Convexity does."

Spyro shook his head, placing a paw over his eyes as he took a deep breath. He'd had to act fast, lest the apparently hyper-technologically-advanced moles in this loop turn Cynder into some sort of cyborg to do their bidding. If nothing else, they still had terrible vision, given the fact that Spyro had managed to sneak Cynder's unconscious body away from their laser-heavy fortress. He sighed. Sometimes, he hated super-advanced technology.

Hearing a rumble through the air, Spyro raised his head, a scowl on his face as he prepared for the possibility of having to tear apart a variety of machines once again, but paused when he saw what appeared to be a mechanical airship heading his way. He blinked, suddenly finding it hard to shake the odd sense of déjà vu he was getting…

"Hello, Spyro!"

Spyro raised an eye-ridge as a mole poked his head over the railing —a mole with a giant cranium unlike any of the other moles Spyro had seen in his world, and a pair of large glasses that magnified his beady eyes to the size of pancakes. Spyro let his mouth fall open, looking on in utter bemusement as the ship touched down and the mole proceeded to hover down to them using some kind of backpack that shot fire from beneath it.

Alighting on the ground, the mole quickly ran over to Spyro, a smile on his face. "Good thing I found you! This loop has been absolutely dreadful. I was lucky I managed to figure out how to reverse the polarity on those crystals keeping me in place, otherwise I would have never gotten to my lab to turn the tides for the moles." He shivered before shaking his head. "Besides, a mole of science like me shouldn't be working in a gem mine. I couldn't even see the pickaxe in front of my face until I was able to create these ultra zoom glasses here."

The mole paused, looking on in confusion as Spyro continued to give him a blank look. Glancing down at himself, the mole jolted and scratched the back of his head.

"Oh, silly me. I completely forgot how different moles look in this loop," the mole said, shaking his head. "It's me, Spyro! The Professor!"

Spyro blinked, sitting down as he placed a paw to his chin. Seconds passed before he jolted up, his eyes going wide.

"Oh, right," he said, raising an eye-ridge, "you're that mole from Spy's loop."

Spyro shook his head before giving the Professor a frown. He wasn't entirely sure what worried him more—that, in the short amount of time the Professor had been in this loop, he'd managed to convert Boyzitbig into something that resembled a sci-fi fortress, or that, even they'd only known each other for a short amount of time, Spyro wasn't really surprised that the Professor was behind it at all.

Fused Loop 35.4: (WarcraftxSpyro pt.1) (Feat: AbZ)

Alexstrasza jumped up, suddenly fully alert even though she had mere moments ago been asleep. Another of these. It was unexplainable by Kalecgos, Nozdormu, or even Malygos himself the one time she had roused him from his madness to question the cause. This was unlike the nightmare that plagued Ysera, for it was her waking hours that were a dream. This, whatever it was, still held life—that she knew down to her bones.

She could feel the boon of Eonar sing and the burden of her charge weigh down; such novel things to her, just as it had been when they were new. But she knew that, in her mind, it had been millennia since she had become the Aspect of Life and been charged with its protection across all of Azeroth. She would have thought it caused by Murozond, if she hadn't heard him express interest in her

condition. The leader of the Infinite Flight was truly twisted. Could it be a Death Curse? Either by Deathwing himself or his chained puppet masters? Repetition until they succeed? But then, why would *she* be the one to remember? To break her will?

What truly terrible creatures the titans had bound.

"Are you alright, my queen?"

Alexstrasza turned to see the one who had spoken. She was young; not old enough to have yet reached adulthood. But she wasn't just out of her shell, either. Her scales were a particularly pale shade of red. If Alexstrasza had to guess, she looked to be nearly fifty. But she was unfamiliar to the red wyrm. The Red Queen knew her children well; it was her duty as mother and Life Aspect.

Lenastrasza: a name never before spoken. An unfamiliar name to a child who should not be, but one that she remembered giving. Alexstrasza reflexively stepped back from the impossible creature.

"I do not remember you, and yet I do," she told the being.

To her surprise, the being blinked and then said a bit nervously, "Oh... Oh! Oh, dear... Ah, would this be the first time something like this has happened to you or someone you know? ...Or, I don't suppose you trust me enough for that?"

"I'm not quite sure of the question," Alexstrasza replied with narrowed eyes.

"Is this the first time that someone or something has been significantly different from what you know or expected? Or the first time that you've suddenly found yourself in the past for no real explainable reason? Both really," Lenastrasza answered without hesitation.

The frank way she replied stopped Alexstrasza in her tracks. Then, collecting herself, she growled out, "Why are you here?"

Lenastrasza wilted almost instantly and began muttering to herself, "Oh, uh... How to explain this? I hope I'm not the only one here; I'm bad at explaining these kinds of things. Er... By chance, really. I wasn't planning on doing anything major this loop. I don't know much about how this world is supposed to work..."

The sight of the young dragon in such obvious distress tugged at the Life Queen's heartstrings. Even knowing that it could be a ploy to make her lower her guard, Alexstrasza, the Life-Binder, softened her gaze. "Perhaps you should start at the beginning, child."

"Er... Right," the younger red dragon agreed. "Well, I guess, to begin with, I know roughly what's going on in the really big picture. Urm, so like I asked before, is there anyone else who is experiencing the same kind of thing where they remember the future but can't figure out why?"

"My sister, Ysera," Alexstrasza replied.

"And which of you remembers more frequently?" Lenastrasza asked. Alexstrazsa flinched and the younger female quickly added, "Or I suppose that's not important at the moment. Ah, anyway, you two really *are* experiencing this. That's perhaps the first thing I should make clear. This isn't visions from the future or anything like that. It also isn't being caused by anyone you could probably think of."

"Not even the Old Ones?" Alexstrasza asked, curious.

The other dragon tilted her head, as if trying to remember something. "Ah, you can actually interact with those right now, on some level at least?"

"Yes," the Life-Binder affirmed. "The titans bound them to this world. Though the mortals cannot truly slay them, they can destroy their constructs and limit their power."

"Then not even them," Lenastrasza stated. "The cause of this is so far beyond ones such as we that we can no more affect what

happens there than a dot on a piece of paper could score your body. They *might* be local avatars or spawn of some real nasty beings that *could* have something to do with this, but this situation is not one that even *they* would want." She shrugged. "They care about chaos for entertainment's sake. If things get worse, everything might just be gone. They don't want that, so they won't intentionally make things worse on an appreciable level, for them. Those like us might still have to deal with whatever they decide to do, however."

Alexstrasza looked at her disbelievingly.

She grimaced. "I've been caught in one of their 'pranks.' Lots of people died. Just to satisfy this one being's curiosity. But in the end, to him, everything that happened might as well have been words on a page."

There was a haunted look in the other dragon's eyes that Alexstrazsa knew too well from her own captivity. "Then what exactly would be the problem?"

"Er...this is difficult to explain. We don't quite know what's wrong, but we've been given analogies that make sense. Imagine if everything you knew, every possible existence and flight of fancy, were all real and everything was part of a gigantic tree. Then, one day, someone took an axe and tried to chop it in half, vertically. Basically, all of existence is damaged. And most of the people who *can* do anything are scrambling to keep *everything* from disappearing."

"Most?"

"Like I said, some enjoy watching the chaos. But even they don't do anything that would hurt the tree more. Because, if it dies, they are gone too. That doesn't mean they don't get bored. And when they do, we're easy targets that can't fight back."

"You have personal experience with this." At the other dragon's nod, Alexstrazsa moved on to another thought. "But isn't there anyone who is willing to stop them?"

"There are a lot more beings who can affect things. The thing is, they are, for the most part, caught up in fixing the tree or fighting with each other. They are all working for the same goal, but they don't all like each other. So what is going on down here often has to take a backseat to what's happening up there. There are some who are attentive and actively benevolent, but they are few and far between. There is a being who is supposed to watch over this world, but I don't know whom. And there are lots of reasons why they might not have made themselves known to you yet. I know of these beings, not what's going on in their heads," she finished apologetically.

"So what exactly are *we* supposed to do?"

Again, Lenastrazsa shrugged. "Live. One thing that the beings did to protect every existence was to set time in a loop. Then, to make sure that nothing was lost, they had to make it so that there is at least one being from each reality who always remembers. It wasn't meant to be a permanent fix, but it was the best of all bad options, and they didn't realize just how extensive the damage was at the time. Since then, there have been other events that have shaken the tree. Some made things better, others made it worse."

"And would you be one who always remembers? If so, why are you here? Doesn't your own existence need you?"

"No, I'm just a regular looper," Lenastrasza answered. "That means that I only sometimes remember what's going on. The ones who always remember, they are called anchors. And anyway, in some possible existences, our realities are connected. So, I guess that would be why I'm here."

"What causes these 'regular loopers,' then? Shouldn't only the anchor be necessary?"

"I'm not entirely sure, but I think it's to help the anchor mentally. Just think about your situation compared to all those who aren't looping. You know what's coming and they don't. And even if you change the future, time still resets over and over again. It's a mental strain that

can break even the strongest of us. But having others who can even somewhat understand? That is a great balm on that constant open wound. We might not understand everything or know every story that our anchor does, but they can talk to us about this and we won't think they are crazy or that something's wrong with them. That's also why loopers tend to be beings that the anchor is close to, that they feel strongly about. Beings that the anchor is likely to seek out advice from, or who might seek out the anchor when it first happens."

"What kind of strong feelings?"

"Usually affection, friendship, the different types of love, though other emotions might do it too. I know a friend who is afraid that a villain from his home existence will start looping, and, for the most part, he only feels hatred and pity for him."

"Neltharion." The name escaped from Alexstrazsa unbidden. She was not even aware she had spoken it until the smaller dragon asked about him. "Neltharion the Black. He was once the Aspect of Earth, but he and his Flight were corrupted by the Old Ones and now seek to free them and bring about the destruction of Azeroth."

Lenastrazsa's eyes went wide. "Are...are you sure that it was an outside force that corrupted them?"

"Yes, though it matters not. It was long ago. The time when they could be saved has long passed," Alexstrazsa said, turning away. No matter what Neltharion had become, there was once a time when she willingly called him brother, and he called her sister.

"Not necessarily."

Alexstrasza's head snapped around to look at the other dragon.

"There exist powers and abilities in all of existence that can purge malicious outside influence. Someone every dear to me, who I willingly call sister, is in much the same position as the Black Flight in

her baseline, the way things went before time began to loop. Her loop's anchor freed her, in baseline. While I don't have access to that power myself, I know it exists. So there is something out there that can free him. And it's probably not the only thing. The question is acquiring these abilities. And, well...you *do* have more than an eternity of eternities to learn them."

Alexstrazsa sighed. "But what then? I would sentence him to an eternity of torment, trapped within his own mind, if I do not free him. And should he be aware of my methods, he would not face me."

"Well, even though it's rare, I have heard about some loopers who are basically...sent *away* to travel to other realities to build up skills and powers to overcome those kinds of problems. Another thing that might happen is that he could just awaken, become conscious of time looping, before the corruption sets in. Loopers *can* awaken before the anchor."

"And what of madness inflicted by grief?"

"Well, maybe stop the thing that caused it? Or therapy? There do exist loops that exist purely to help loopers recover or help with whatever problem there is. But in-loop, beyond that, I'm not sure what to suggest without more specifics."

"Hmm, I suppose," the Life-Binder said. "Earlier, you said that you hoped you weren't the only one here. What did you mean by that?"

"Oh uh, like I said, I'm just a regular looper. I was hoping that either my anchor, his brother, or my sister were here. They'd probably be better at explaining this than I am."

"And how would we be able to tell?"

"Er…they'd probably be in a similar situation to me. A member of one of the dragonflights that wasn't here in your baseline."

Trying to think of any other face that should not be within her own flight, Alexstrazsa came up blank. She could remember every other member of her flight from before this iteration. "Perhaps in one of the other flights, but not within mine."

"Oh, alright… Um…then I guess we have to figure out what we are going to do. What normally happens in this loop, anyway?"

Alexstrasza hissed. How could she have forgotten? The Infinite Flight! She began to walk out to the bleak skies of Northrend.

"Uh…is something wrong?" Lenastrasza asked, quickly falling into step behind her.

"The Infinite Flight. They seek to alter Azeroth's fate to free the Old Ones. In previous times, they have found me to be an interesting toy and sought to replicate whatever mechanism it is that allowed Ysera and myself to freely manipulate fate. The bronze fight them off, but if your friends are here, they might be attacked before they could be warned."

Lenastrazsa started. "You mean the Bronze Flight that's in charge of maintaining the timeline? They don't care that you can do this?"

"I asked Nozdormu about it once. It seems that, in these timelines, I was always meant to become aware of time repeating. So when I do and act upon that, I am actually fulfilling this iteration's true timeline." Alexstrazsa shrugged. "He said it was a difficult concept to explain to someone if they understood time linearly."

"I can imagine," Lenastrazsa said with a grimace.

As the sky became fully visible, the two saw the strange dark scales of the Infinite Flight. And, among them, two more dragons trying to fend them off. An impossible situation, it seemed, when they looked to be about Lenastrazsa's age and belonged to two separate flights —one blue, the other bronze. But, somehow, they seemed to be doing it.

"It must be Spyro!" Lenastrasza cheered. Seeing the Life-Binder look at her, she further explained. "One of them, probably the blue, is my reality's anchor. His brother is the bronze. They're both called Spyro and they both anchor separate realities."

"I see," Alexstrasza said slowly. "Still, it seems that we should lend them our aid. The Infinite Flight is not something to be trifled with."

With that, the two red dragons flew to the center of the cloudy sky peppered with dark stars. As they approached, the blue acknowledged them with a laugh and a cry of, "Ember! Hey, welcome to the butt-kicking party!"

The bronze nodded at them before he flew a bit closer to the waiting dragons.

Then a laugh pervaded the air. "Oh look, nearly everyone is here. One more and this shall be complete. And here she comes now!"

On the horizon, they saw another dark spot. But, unlike the Infinite Flight, this dragon's dark scales were more natural. A member of the Black Dragonflight.

"Cynder!" the bronze dragon called out. The black dragon seemed to perk up and headed towards their circle of uneasy safety.

"My, my," the voice from before spoke. "Two from the red, one from bronze, blue, and black each! It's almost a perfectly even spread! But then, Ysera is simply so *dreadfully* busy about this time, isn't she? It would be rude to impose."

"Morozund!" the Aspect of Life shouted back to the sky. "Show yourself!"

"Right here, dear sister," the voice said, causing the loopers to twist and see the negative dragon in the center of their formation. "My, my, so jumpy. I just want to ask you all some questions."

"Yeah, because you needed an army to attack us beforehand for that," the blue shot back.

"Would you have gathered together any other way? No, don't answer that, because I already know. You wouldn't have. You would have constantly missed each other, never once to speak. And yet, here I call my flight to collect the blue and you all come running!" Morozund laughed.

"Leave, now," the bronze stated.

"Not until I have my answer. It is a simple question, really. There exists something. Something that could shatter this anomaly wide open. I want to know what it is. Why you are able to disappear in a flash of light and be beyond *my* sight! I am time! How can you escape my grasp when even *I* am shackled down?"

At the shared look of horror on each of the younger dragons' faces, Alexstrazsa looked at Lenastrasza. "I thought you said there was nothing we could do about this anomaly?"

"He's talking about ascending," the black dragon answered. "It's the one thing we are forbidden to do while the loops are in place. There have been two attempts of it since the loops began. On both times, *at least* one loop was wiped from existence. During the second, the damage was so extensive that, if the stories are true, it almost permanently killed all those who were anchors at that time. I don't think Yggdrasil can survive a third."

"I've had others point out that it's only during the loops that this is a problem," the blue added. "Once this is all over, we're going to have one last loop and, after that's over and our role is done, we can ascend safely and be with everyone from all over the multiverse! There's probably going to be a massive party!"

"And when would that be?" Morozund asked.

"We don't know," the blue replied simply. "We'll probably be told when it's about to happen, but 'til then, we deal. Simple as that. Some of the oldest guys have lost track of the times that they've lost track of the times they've lost track of how long it's been since this all started."

The negative dragon sneered. "So, you do it simply because it is too dangerous to use? How foolish! I'll take that power from you and shatter this prison myself!"

"Let's see you try!"

With that, everything descended into a scaleball. Alexstrasza noticed a blue streak shooting homing fireballs zoom by, well outpacing his Infinite Flight pursuers as she brought low another of the Infinite Flight. And just when it seemed that the Infinite Flight had outmaneuvered him, he would either ram though one of them with a head-butt or disappear from vision in a teleport, only to come crashing down on some other target.

The others were staying closer together, though they needed not her help. The black and bronze were quite the pair, obviously familiar with each other.

But then she noticed that Lenastrasza had left a gap in her defense, and Morozund had noticed it as well. And there was no way for anyone to get between them. Morozund shouted his victory and Lenastrazsa turned to look at him.

There was a terrible crack as the young red fell under Morozund's claw. Morozund shrieked in pain, staring at the bloody stump that had, a moment before, been a fully functioning forelimb. The young red twisted out from under the detached weapon and stared in shock at what she had done. Words almost forgotten came back to her.

" *While it was clever to trick the enemy into thinking you were pulling off a diversion, and then using the barrier spell to daze them when they charged…there was the very real danger that, had you*

performed the spell too late, I could have lost more than my claws when I attempted to grab you."

Ember hyperventilated. This wasn't what she was used to. Robots, golems— those she could fight. Robots didn't bleed, didn't really die.

Then she heard a familiar voice cut through all her thoughts. *"Follow through!"*

Without realizing it, she channeled her fire into a blaze and lashed out around her, causing the enemies who were seeking vengeance for the damage done to Morozund to scatter.

Then she heard a shout of "Ember!" and watched as her Spyro crashed into the negative dragon and sent him away with a tail-slap to the throat. The currently blue dragon filled her vision and asked, "Are you okay?"

"Ye… No," she heard herself mumble.

"That's alright, we can handle these guys," he said. "So go make sure everything important is still in place. Okay?"

"Er, yeah, alright," she agreed as the world went bright for a moment from Spyro's teleport.

However, as she searched around, she noticed another cloud of something approaching, fire scorching the earth underneath it. She had to get back.

Classic Loop 35.5:

The sound of heavy panting rang throughout the temples of the Magic Crafters as a thief clothed in blue robes ran as fast as he could, his mouth open wide, glancing back over his shoulder. No one. Absolutely no one. Good.

The thief turned back to look at the dragon egg clutched in his hands, a blend of red and yellow blending delicately together. Why he had been sent to capture these things, he was unsure—and, in his book, it definitely wasn't worth it. Not for the predicament it had gotten him in. Not when it meant being chased by this monster. Not if it—

A crack echoed through the temple, causing the thief to jump and pick up the pace. He glanced back. Still no one there, but the dense, choking darkness of the temple's shade made it hard to tell. Why the hell these dragons never invested in light switches, he would never know, especially with how technologically-advanced they were.

The thief darted from hallway to hallway, his eyes darting every which way in search of an exit, daring not to double back to where he come from lest he risk running into *it.* He could feel it. It's presence. He couldn't see it, but he knew it was there, somewhere in the halls. Watching. Waiting to pounce when the opportunity presented itself.

The thief stumbled, nearly tripping over his own robes. A rookie mistake, and one he was kicking himself for, thanks to it causing him to let out a yelp of terror.

He paused, but it wasn't long before he once again picked up the pace, the rapid tapping of footsteps heading his way only being drowned out by his own. It was upon him, closing in on him, barely a few halls away. It was determined. Determined to catch him and make him pay for his sins. Sins he was regretting ever committing.

He considered dropping the egg, dropping it and running as fast as he could, but it wouldn't help. He was in too deep. It was determined to catch him, to make him pay for what he'd done. The unbridled fury in its eyes when he'd first encountered it pierced his soul and sent chills down his spine. It didn't matter what he did. It wouldn't stop until it caught him or until he lost it. Either way, he would come out of this with his pay—maybe even demand more for what he was being put through—or die trying.

Tap, tap, tap.

The rapid ticking of footsteps grew louder. The thief ducked through a room and out towards the hall next to it.

Tap, tap, tap.

The intensity of the echoes grew and the thief began to sense it drawing close as he headed down the hall, sweat dripping down his face as his heart pounded, feeling like it would give out at any moment

Tap, tap, tap.

The thief rounded a corner and skidded to a stop, gasping as he felt his soul die at the sight of dead-end. There were no rooms to his left or right. The thief spun around, but it was already too late. He panted, stepping back as he saw the shadow of it growing in the hall. It was coming, coming for him! And, this time, there was no escape. He bumped into the wall, eyes wide and jaw dropped, the egg shaking in his hands.

It rounded the corner and, finally, came face-to-face with him.

Unrelenting rage in its eyes and fire dancing around its claws, it took a step forward, its growl echoing down the halls. The thief let out a yelp before quickly and carefully setting the egg on the ground, pushing it gently forward. The gesture was futile. The beast continued to move forward, its eyes never leaving the thief, even for a second. He pressed himself against the wall, his shriek of terror screaming through the halls as it lunged forward.

Spyro walked across the hillside of the Magic Crafters Homeworld. Looking towards one of the temples, he beheld a pink dragoness walking out with a basket in her maw that held a red-and-yellow dragon egg. Spyro smirked as she walked over to him.

"Thanks for helping get through this part of the loop quicker," he said, giving a grin. "Really needed the extra time for what I had planned this loop."

"No problem," Ember said, gently setting the egg down. Looking back up, she gave a small smile. "Always happy to help."

Spyro grinned, gently picking the egg up and, in a flash of light, teleporting it back to the nursery in the Artisan Realm. He chuckled, a grin on his face, before he looked over with a raised eye-ridge.

"Chasing that thief didn't give you too much trouble, did it?" he asked, shaking his head. "I know they used to drive me nuts when I first started my adventure."

"Oh, it was no trouble," Ember said, waving a paw with a grin on her face. "In fact, I don't think we'll have to worry about that particular thief for the rest of the loop."

Not too far away, a battered, bruised and very singed thief stumbled out of the temple and fell face-first on the ground with a thud.

Legend Loop 35.6:

Spyro's left eye twitched.

Normally when there was a variant where Malefor wasn't involved, he enjoyed it. But there was little he found enjoyable about this variant. Not because it was hellish, where everything that *could* go wrong *did* , and not because it was another loop where he had to babysit a human-turned-dragon. No, those were annoying, but they were ones he could handle.

This loop was something entirely different.

"Alright, everyone take your seats. Class is now in session," Ignitus said, standing in front of his desk while looking rather distinguished in a pair of glasses.

Spyro sighed and sat down at his desk, looking around the classroom with a dull expression in his eyes.

Dragons did not go to school. At least, not in the conventional sense, like most humans did. To see a group of dragons all sitting attentively at their desks made Spyro uneasy. Dragons did not belong in a classroom.

It wasn't like he hated learning stuff. Spyro was always eager to learn from the guardians, but this made no sense. For starters, dragons were only taught how to utilize their element to its fullest extent, and how to survive in the wild. At most, anything other than basic reading and writing ability and basic math would be thrown in, and reading and writing was, naturally, far more prioritized. If a dragon wanted to pursue a more intellectual lifestyle, it was their own choice. They were never forced to like they were this loop.

Secondly, he didn't see much point to it, either. Since when would a dragon need algebra or long division in their daily life? The world they were in often made such things trivial, as basic math was only ever really needed.

All this, though, paled in comparison to what he hated the most. He could handle all of the above. He was patient and didn't mind learning such things, even if they would be trivial. He could deal with all of that…

"Man, I heard the purple dragon was nice on the eyes, but wow…"

"I know, right? Like, oh my ancestors! I can't believe he's in our class."

"Stupid purple… How are any of us regular dragons supposed to compete with Mister 'Look at me! I'm special and well put-together!?'

"

Spyro head-desked at the whispers abound in the classroom. He could handle all of that…if it weren't for the high-school clique crap.

He slowly lifted his head, looking onward with a frown. He'd often thought this about many a loop, but now it was truer than ever. This was going to be a long loop…

"Oh, Spyro…!"

Spyro froze, his eye twitching as he slowly looked around, coming face-to-face with the all-too-familiar dragoness with a chandelier for a head. It took everything he had to not immediately scarper out of the room at the sight of Flashwing, but he couldn't stop the look of horror from showing up on his face. He let out a low groan, looking forward again as he rested his head on his desk.

A very, very long loop indeed…

Classic Loop 35.7:

Spyro exited the temple leading to Toasty's Lair, glancing back with a scowl at the multitude of soot-covered dogs. No matter how many loops he went through, those dogs were always an annoyance in some fashion. Shaking his head, he turned towards the crystallized dragon on the pedestal and ran over to touch it. In a flash, the dragon was freed and looking down at Spyro with a worried expression.

"Gnasty Gnorc has put one of his most *genius* henchmen in charge of the Artisan world," Nevin said, glancing towards the not-far-off arena.

"Yeah. Takes a lot of brainpower to put on a cloak and walk on stilts," Spyro muttered, a smirk on his face as he glanced towards Sparx.

"You have to admit, though, that *is* pretty impressive for a sheep," Sparx said, giving a grin.

"Be careful, Spyro!" Nevin said before disappearing in a flash of light.

Spyro smirked, raising a paw to his chest as he closed his eyes.

"Please, like I'll need it at this point!" he said, grinning as he glanced over to Sparx. "I swear, Toasty is weaker than some of the normal minions I've faced on my adventures."

"Or fodder animals, for that matter," Sparx said, giving a grin as he landed on Spyro's head.

Spyro chuckled, glancing upward with a smirk. "Remember the time we tricked him into dying his own fur pink?"

"Or made him defeat himself by tripping over his own stilts?" Sparx added, chuckling as he held a hand to his forehead.

"I'll bet he had to practically beg Gnasty to join in his revenge plot!" Spyro said, bursting into a fit of laughter. "If it weren't for that, I doubt Gnasty would have let him join at all!"

Both dragon and dragonfly busted up into a fit of laughter, Spyro shaking his head as he stepped forward. Taking a deep breath to calm himself, he headed into the arena with a smirk.

"Alright, let's get this over with," Spyro said, taking a fighting stance. "I have better things to do this loop."

Spyro dug his claws into the ground, but was quick to pause, raising his head and glancing around. Neither Toasty nor his hounds—which were, quite honestly, the more dangerous of the two, in Spyro's opinion—were anywhere to be seen. Spyro stood up, taking a few steps forward as he glanced around.

"What the heck…?" he asked, glancing over to Sparx.

Before Sparx could reply, a rumbling shook the ground and Spyro dug his claws in to brace himself. Glancing around, he saw nothing but the boundaries of the arena, with a few shingles falling off the rooftops of the temples. Spyro raised an eye-ridge.

"Huh?" Sparx muttered, suddenly glancing around frantically. Stopping, he looked at Spyro, scratching the top of his head. "Is it me, or did it get dark all of a sudden?"

Spyro blinked before glancing down. Slowly looking up, he saw that he had been eclipsed by a shadow. He paused before slowly turning around. Upon seeing who had cast the shadow, his jaw dropped.

Standing tall behind the wall was a giant armored robot, a jack-o-lantern for a head, turrets attached to its shoulders, and a scythe in one hand. In the very center, an enraged sheep glared down at the dragon. The robot's fist raised and pointed at Spyro, the joints connecting it beginning to glow, before it shot straight towards him.

Spyro barely had time to gulp, his pupils shrinking as the fist filled his vision.

Fused Loop 35.8: (Brother, oh Brother Pt. 1)

"Why are we going fishing?" Legend Sparx whined, floating a good ways away from the shores of the riverbank. "If you guys wanted to spend some time together, couldn't we just go to the park? Or a meadow? Or literally *any* place that doesn't have things that eat bugs!?"

Chuckles escaped the lips of all dragons present, who were standing by the riverbank with fishing poles and tackle boxes carefully strung over their backs. Classic rolled his eyes, hanging back and glancing over to Legend Sparx with a smirk.

"Hey, you wanted my help with getting Ro a hobby, right?" he asked.

"Yeah, but I was thinking something that would get him out of the temple more. Not something where he can use me as substitute bait when I get on his nerves!" Sparx said, throwing his arms in the air. "What made you choose fishing, anyways? I never took you for one to promote cruelty to bugs!"

"I don't know. First thing that popped into my mind that I thought Ro would like," Classic said, slowly taking a few steps forward. "Fishing isn't exactly my thing, but it's such an old…sport? Can fishing be considered a sport?" Classic asked, looking over to Legend Sparx with a raised eye-ridge. Shaking it off, he looked forward once again. "Never mind. Anyways, fishing is a thing that's been around for such a long time, I figured it'd be something Ro would have in his baseline as well."

"Couldn't you try something like going sightseeing, then?" Sparx asked, quickly following behind Classic with a frown. "We could see the sights back then! All we ever do is follow the baseline, so there's tons of places to explore!"

"Like?" Classic asked, looking back with a smirk.

"Well, there's…" Sparx said, raising his index finger in the air. "There's…uh..."

Classic grinned as Legend Sparx lowered his head in defeat. Looking back towards the river, he saw Legend looking down at the cold water, light reflecting off it and giving it a peaceful sheen. Classic paused before a devious grin appeared on his face. Slowly tip-toeing over, he began to stand up on his hind legs. Slowly but surely, he made his way over. Inches behind Legend, he charged forward, forepaws first.

"Wha—gaaaaaah!"

A resounding splash echoed out as a purple dragon went tumbling into the river. Unfortunately for Classic, it wasn't the one he'd

intended. Splashing around, Classic resurfaced with a scowl and glared as Legend did his best to suppress a chuckle.

"Sorry, Spy," Legend said, a playful smirk on his face. "But did you forget I come from a baseline where I pretty much have to always be aware of possible sneak attacks?"

Classic groaned, rolling his eyes as he heard Legend chuckle. Not far behind, Cynder walked over with a raised eye-ridge.

"Please tell me this day isn't just going to be you two attempting to push each other into the river," she said, glancing between the two with an exasperated look. "I'm actually interested in learning how to fish. Good source of food if we ever end up in a loop where we have to fend for ourselves."

Legend glanced over with a frown. Cynder blinked before shaking her head.

"Oh, no, no, I'm not saying that because of myself," Cynder said, repeatedly glancing between the two Spyros. "It's something that could happen to any of us, so it's a good survival skill for all of us to have."

Legend looked at Cynder with a raised eye-ridge and she slowly began to glance away. While Legend could decipher the truth behind her words, an odd air of unease followed. He tilted his head. Cynder quickly cleared her throat. Legend opened his mouth, but, before he could get a word out, a loud clunk and a groan rang out, catching the attention of everyone present.

Looking back, the group of loopers watched Ember slowly make her way towards them with a large, overstuffed backpack draped over her, struggling to stand. Cynder huffed, a small amused smile on her face. Quickly running over to Ember, Cynder stepped up next to her, helping her support some of the weight.

"Thanks," Ember said, looking over with a relieved smile.

"No problem," Cynder said, giving a grin. Glancing at the backpack, she raised an eye-ridge before looking back at Ember. "I know you said you were going to be late, but I had no idea this was the reason. Don't you think all this is a bit much?"

"Not really," Ember said, glancing over with a blank look in her eyes. "I've never been fishing before, or gone out into the wild like this for more than an hour or so with my parents." A grin appeared on her face. "So I wanted to be prepared for anything."

"You don't really need all this, though," Cynder said, a reassuring smile on her face. "The dragons of my world often catch fish using their bare paws. I don't think it's much of a stretch to say dragons of your world can do it too."

"Maybe," Ember said, shaking her head before looking back with an awkward smile. "Somehow, I don't think I'm nearly as skilled that regard."

Legend looked on blankly before he let out a small chuckle, a smile appearing on his face. As Cynder continued the conversation and helped Ember move towards the lake, Legend glanced back, seeing a thoroughly annoyed and waterlogged Classic pull himself out of the river. He chuckled as Classic tried to shake the water off before Classic walked over to him with a smirk.

"Oh, found that funny, did you?" Classic asked, raising an eye-ridge. "You realize it's on now, right?"

"You can try," Legend said, giving a grin. "But, as said, I've been trained to be ready for any kind of sneak attack."

A playful glint appeared in Legend's eyes at the sight of the defiant smirk on Classic's face. Legend Sparx watched the scene with his eyes wide, scratching the back of his head. Pouting, he crossed his arms.

"Oh sure, when I attempt to do something silly, I get scowled at, but bring in his mirror clone and he's all for anything," Sparx muttered, shaking his head before flying towards the two dragons.

"So, uh," he said, glancing awkwardly between the two Spyros. "Do I have to go near the lake? I saw on that TV thing that there are supposedly fish out there who can jump, and if there's anything that would make them..."

"Yeah," Classic said, looking over to Legend Sparx with a smirk. "Everyone needs peace and quiet now and then."

Sparx scowled as the two dragons in front of him began laughing up a storm. Legend took a deep breath before looking towards Sparx with a smile.

"Don't worry, Sparx," he said, getting up and walking past him. "You don't have to if you don't want to. I'm sure Ember's going to need help setting up with…"

Legend paused, watching as Cynder helped get the backpack off Ember. As they set it on the ground, Ember took a few deep breaths, her head lowered as she sat down. Cynder looked at the pack with a raised eye-ridge, placing a claw to her chin. Carefully, she reached a paw out to one of its many zippers. Looking up, Ember gasped and quickly extending her paws forward in an attempt to stop her.

It was too little, too late. No sooner did Cynder undo the zipper did she get bombarded with an assortment of cloths, tent poles and ropes. Legend looked on blankly as Ember held her paws over her maw at the sight of the wiggling dragoness buried under the tent supplies. A long string of muffled words, which Ember could only hope didn't consist of anything that wasn't fit for youngling ears, came from beneath the mess.

"...whatever she's setting up," Legend finished, a flat expression on his face.

"How the heck did she even *fit* all that stuff in that backpack?" Classic asked, tilting his head.

"The better question is why didn't she just use her subspace…?" Legend muttered, slowly placing a paw over his face.

Quickly shaking it off, he darted over with Classic in tow before a very angry dragoness could make short work of Ember's efforts. Sparx looked on with a scowl, crossing his arms and turning away.

"Classic thinks he's so funny…" Sparx muttered, glancing back at the mess. " 'Everyone needs peace and quiet, ha ha, I can make Ro laugh and Sparx can't.' "

Sparx watched as Classic stumbled back, falling flat on his tail while attempting to avoid being swiped at by Cynder, who had somehow only succeeded in hogtying her hind legs while attempting to get out of Ember's unintentional booby trap. Legend chuckled at the sight, quickly helping to untie her as Ember did her best to try and keep Cynder calm. Sparx huffed, narrowing his eyes as Classic got up and scratched the back of his head.

"Well, I'll have you know, buddy, I was here first," Sparx muttered, turning around with scowl. "Ro is my brother. You may be a dragon like him, but I've know him far longer. If you think you can just waltz in and become his new favorite, then think again."

Sparx made a fist and smashed it into the palm of his other hand. "If you want a fight, then get ready for a war."

Sparx put pressure on his fist, cracking his knuckles…and quickly shook the hand he had cracked, letting out a slight yelp as he waved the hand to and fro before grabbing it with his other hand, trying to keep from shouting in pain. Looking up, he glared towards Classic.

"...You win this round."

(A/N: Hello everyone. Sorry for how long this took, but a lot of things have been happening when it comes to the writers of the loops as of late.

For starters, Ukelele is sadly no longer working with us. Thanks to looking for a job and building up his programming skills, he's had to drop the project to prioritize his real life. I hope all you readers can respect his decision, as real life should *always* be prioritized before fan stuff like this.

That said, it's left us in an awkward position here. He was going to head the next major part of the Mega Arc, and it's not something that can be easily dropped since it plays a heavy role in the Arc's ending. I have a general idea of what he had planned and I'm hoping I can get it done without too much of a difference from his original vision, but don't be surprised if things take a while to get done for now.

Similarly, in the stop gap while all this was happening, I realized something about the filler snips. Legend's unwillingness to prank in his baseline is seriously starting to strangle what I can do with him at the moment and, in turn, what I can do in the Legend parts of the filler snips. It's getting a bit problematic, as I was hoping to use snips where the Classic characters mess around in the Legend branch as a stop gate until I can get him naturally okay with pranking, but with the Classic in Legendverse mega-arc only approaching slowly on the horizon…

I have two solutions to this problem. The first involves a 'filler' snip focusing entirely on getting him okay with this, which would likely take up an entire chapter in and of itself. Similarly, given the general loose order snips take place in with all loops in general, I might lift the 'ban' I had on writing snips involving the characters in the other worlds, or at least the ones who are plot-important to said arcs, and make it apparent that the mega-arc featuring this premise is the first time it canonically

happens. However, this may cause some major plot holes and inconsistencies when the actual arc happens.

Alternatively, we could try marathoning the current on-going mega arc to get it done, with no filler in-between, so we can start up the swap-worlds mega arc sooner, but I'm not sure how many of our readers would be okay with that. If you can, leave a review in regards to that, so we can know if it's a possibility you guys would be okay with.

Either way, I'm going to be damned determined to get Legend okay with pranking, so that 'snip' I mentioned may happen regardless. It'll involve another author, though, so that may take a while depending on how free she is.

In the meantime, with this massive update out of the way, time to get to the loop 'alt-text.' You may notice there are eight loops instead of the standard ten this time. This is because the chapter has gone on longer than intended and reached over 16,000 words in length with that alone. I'd rather prioritize keeping chapter length non-marathon-y, if possible, so I'm going to have to break the 'looper code' on this one…

35.1: I still need to watch past the first season of Legend of Korra. I only have a vague clue who Raava and Vaatu are…

35.2: …Can you guess what arc I was trying to finish here?

35.3: Only the Professor knows how he pulls off half the stuff he does.

35.4: I've never played WoW in my life, so a lot of what AbZ wrote here went flying over my head…

35.5: Hell hath no fury like a protective pink dragoness.

35.6: … You know, just pointing that out. /shot

35.7: If there's one thing the loops love, it's when someone starts tempting fate.

35.8: I should just face facts that, no matter how hard I try, random mini-arcs will pop up no matter what. Still, nice to acknowledge that Legend Sparx is still a thing, especially considering that not many fics in general do. /shot

As always, remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and if you want to join in on the loop shenanigans, make sure to check out the SpaceBattles thread or the official FF.N Forum.

Until then, this is TokoWH, signing off. Have a nice day!)

More party members!

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

Legend Loop 36.1: (Feat: GoldenGriffiness)

Spyro stared down at his unimpressed companion, who was making it quite clear that he wasn't Sparx. The muttering was getting a bit tiresome.

"Nooo, the mouse incident wasn't enough. 'Little ponies' wasn't enough. Arrietty wasn't enough. Now I wake up little, with everything so freaking huge that a *frog-plant* eats me. It wasn't enou—"

"Uh… Whoever's replacing Sparx?" Spyro asked cautiously, one eye-ridge raised. He looked like Sparx, except with a diminutive blond braid, a metal arm, and half his tail coated in metal.

"S'not enough to get stuck in a loop and never grow up…"

Spyro had to blink helplessly as he looked up at the dragon that should have been Ignitus, who was sporting a blue uniform and a pair of white battle-claws with red arrays.

"Well, Fullmetal, it feels like it's been a long time for you, but it's been a very *short* time for me since that last prank you pulled."

Spyro decided he'd rather not know.

A camera was pulled out of Mustang's subspace pocket.

Edward's brow twitched.

"Anyway, Fullmetal," Mustang continued later, "what do you know about this loop? As of my loop memories, the Dark Master here has

a servant named Greed, who seems to carry more traits of Ling. What are the chances it's him, do you think?"

"The art of ice-spitting has been passed down the ice dragon line for generations!"

Edward face-palmed. Spyro stared. This weird fusion was obviously not awake, and just as annoying as both Cyril and Armstrong could get at their worst.

"Hawkeye?"

"Sir?"

"You're an anthropomorphic cheetah."

"I had noticed, sir."

The Destroyer reached towards the sky and looked about as confused as a great construct of lava, earth and stone could. Spyro, Ling and Edward stopped before it, confused when it stared at them with decidedly more humanity than said construct usually appeared to possess.

"Ling?" The childlike voice emanating from it was also greatly unexpected. "Are you a dragon? Is brother here?"

"Right here, Al," came the response.

The great golem searched for his brother, but it was quickly discovered that Ed was too small, and Al too large, for the younger brother to see him.

Edward was not impressed.

Many wondered why, instead of completing its ring of destruction, the Destroyer decided its time was better spent crushing Malefor like a mosquito.

Classic Loop 36.2:

Spyro huffed. So far, it had been a pretty standard loop. There wasn't much he had planned this time, so he'd decided to go along with the baseline as best he could, hoping that maybe there was a variant of some kind that could help him get out of his prank block. So far, though, he had been disappointed. It was almost near the end of the loop and everything had been pretty much standard.

Spyro sat in the dojo as the Elders argued amongst themselves. If it wasn't Ragnar calling everyone besides himself an old fart, it was Titan asking why they were there again for the twentieth time in a row. While it had been funny originally, it had lost its charm after the seventh loop or so. Rolling his eyes, Spyro got up, knowing it was time for him to receive the banish spell once again… But he paused.

"Hey," Spyro said, glancing around. "Where's Red?"

"Oh!" Tomas exclaimed, looking down at Spyro with a smile. "Understandably, he's still recovering from his time as the Sorcerer's pawn. He was really quite out of it, looking at us like he'd seen a ghost and what not."

"Bah, a likely story," Astor chimed in, a scowl on his face. "The old coot's likely faking for sympathy. I still say we shouldn't trust him."

Spyro frowned, a flat look in his eyes. Shaking it off, he glanced at Tomas, looking up with his eyes wide. "Where is he now?"

"I believe he is somewhere in town at the moment, likely looking for a house of his own," Tomas said, looking down with a raised eye-ridge. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, no reason…" Spyro said, glancing away with a slight frown. "I was just thinking of checking up on him, is all."

"I wouldn't do that if I were you, Spyro!" Astor said, looking down with a scowl. "It's an act! An act, I say!"

"Come now, darling, you need to learn to be more trusting!" Magnus said, looking over to Astor with a slight wave of his paw. "If it truly was an act, I think we all would have spotted it by now, wouldn't we, dearie?"

Astor huffed, glancing away with his arms crossed. "Yes, because if there's anyone who knows anything about acts…"

"Astor!" Tomas said, looking over to him with a glare.

"I'm just saying," Astor said, looking back with a smirk. "Certain acts are more transparent than others!"

Spyro blinked as Tomas and Astor quickly got into an argument, while Magnus watched on with an utterly confused look in his eyes. Spyro shook his head before turning around and heading out of the dojo. By now, he knew all too well that, when the elders got into a fight, it was best to leave then and there, lest he be there the entire loop.

Spyro walked around the town square with a raised eye-ridge. Red had never attempted to get his own home there in any of the previous loops. Something was up, and he needed to find out what. The only question now was where to even begin.

"Hey, Spyro!"

Spyro glanced back, seeing a pink dragoness quickly heading his way. Ember screeched to a halt, looking at Spyro with a smile. A slight grin appeared on Spyro's face and he gave a small chuckle.

"Hey, Embs," he said, turning around. "I don't suppose you've seen Red, have you?"

"Yeah, he's gotten a house near the middle of the town," Ember said, tilting her head. "He was actually wanting to see you. That's why he sent me to look for you."

"He did?" Spyro paused, somewhat gobsmacked by the very idea. ' *Red's never done that before, in any of the baseline loops...'*

He glanced down, staring blankly as he tuned out the world around him. Ember frowned, lowering her head to look him in the eyes.

"Spyro?" she asked, raising an eye-ridge.

"Huh? Oh!" Spyro jumped, quickly shaking his head before looking at her with a forced smile.

Ember narrowed her eyes, placing a paw to her cheek. Stepping forward, she raised an eye-ridge once again. "Spyro? Are you alright?"

"Oh, yeah," Spyro said, taking a deep breath. "I'm just wondering something, is all. I don't think you'd quite get it."

"Why?" Ember asked, blinking as she sat on the ground.

"It'd…it'd take too long to explain, or to get you to believe me about it," Spyro said, shaking his head. "You're just going to have to take my word on that, because, if what I'm thinking is true, I really need to speak to Red *now* ."

"Well..." Ember frowned, looking at Spyro with a concerned glint in her eyes. "Alright… I'd still like to know eventually, though, not to sound nosey or anything."

"Sure. Just don't think I'm crazy when I do explain it," Spyro said, giving a grin.

"Okay!"

Spyro chuckled, quickly turning around and beginning to head towards the town square.

"Oh, by the way, Spyro…"

"Sorry, Ember, but not yet."

Ember chuckled, giving a cheeky grin as she leant forward. "Can't blame a dragoness for trying, can you?"

Spyro smirked, watching as Ember began to head back to her home. Unawake Ember was always an interesting bag. Spyro may have at least been able to convince her that he wasn't ready for a girlfriend yet, but while Ember was willing to tone down the affection as a result, that still didn't stop her from periodically checking in.

Spyro shook his head. Now was not the time to dwell on that, though. Picking up the pace, he began to head towards the town square.

The room was dimly lit, with barely anything in it besides a bed and some bare shelves, illuminated only by the light of the sun. Spyro slowly pushed the door open, creeping in as he glanced around.

"Red? You in here?" he called, raising an eye-ridge.

"Spyro?"

Spyro glanced towards the far side of the room, seeing the elder sitting atop the bed, hunched over and seemingly staring off at something miles away. Spyro gave a smile, slowly making his way in.

"I know you just moved in and all, but maybe you should consider getting some electricity in this place?" he asked with a smirk. "This

place is way too gloomy as it is."

Red remained silent, looking down at Spyro with a blank stare, before he grasped his head in his paws. Taking a deep breath, he looked back at Spyro with a stern expression.

"Spyro, are you aware that time is repeating itself?" he asked, shaking his head. "I figured it was best to come out and ask, considering how you always seem to be in the middle of anything strange that goes on in the realms."

Spyro blinked, looking up with a blank expression on his face. Before long, he grinned and closed his eyes as he began to chuckle. Red raised an eye-ridge before his eyes widened.

"Spyro…?" Red asked, lowering a paw towards him. "Are you… crying?"

Not a second afterwards, Spyro quickly rubbed his eyes to get rid of the tears that were beginning to form. Taking a deep breath, he looked back up with a smile.

"N-no. Just, uh…allergies, is all," Spyro said, letting out a nervous chuckle. Shaking it off, he grinned and closed his eyes once again. "In any case, welcome to the loops, Red!"

Red blinked before he began to scratch his head. Giving a sigh, he shrugged. "Again, somehow I'm not surprised that you're in the middle of this."

Spyro laughed, failing to fight back the tears once again.

Legend Loop 36.3: (Feat: AbZ)

Ignitus grimaced and sighed. There was just no getting around it. The fact of the matter was that Spyro had every right to apply. In fact, in any other situation, the fact that Spyro hadn't yet brought it up

—or that he, as Spyro's master, had not even mentioned the idea—would be a sign that his pupil was, in fact, hopeless. No, it was a sign that he, as a teacher, had no faith. No, wait, at this point, it would most definitely mean that his student was hopeless.

"Yo, Iggy, what's up?" a familiar voice asked, breaking the Fire Guardian from his thoughts.

"I am contemplating my failings as a teacher," Ignitus replied, not bothering to look up at the dragonfly.

"You better not let my bro hear that one. He'll wind up spending the next thousand loops trying to prove you wrong. And, honestly, some of the stuff that he starts writing, it's so bone-dry and flat I'm surprised it isn't forming sand, especially when he wants to prove a point," Sparx said, tilting his head, rolling his eyes and sticking out his tongue.

Laughing despite himself, Ignitus could not argue with Sparx's assessment of some of Spyro's earlier works. Finishing with a snort, he continued. "That does not change my failings. The fact of the matter is that Spyro was long ago of the ability to be considered a Master. At the least in Fire. While I can speculate that his growth has been less—but still existent—in the other elements, because I myself am not proficient in their use, I cannot truly state his worthiness in those fields."

"Okay, so what's the problem?"

"Simply put, it is not my decision alone to make, and I would like the other Guardians to also be looping so that it isn't something that he will have to repeat. This is a very important event for those who dedicate themselves to our way of life, and I don't want that to be spoiled and become a simple check to cross off his list of things to do every loop."

"I'm still not seeing the problem here."

"I have not yet mentioned this to him... I do not wish him to try to force another of the Guardians to begin looping, as I remember reading how such endeavours would turn out. Nor do I wish him to be disappointed because I must constantly push back something that he, by all rights, should have gained long ago."

"Tell him," Sparx stated. "I know my bro. He's not going to hold it against you, Terrador, or the Two-Dragon Peanut Gallery. Besides, if you keep fretting about this, he's going to think something's wrong and end up making a fool of himself trying to fix it. And while I normally don't turn down the opportunity for free blackmail, considering how dogged he can get about these types of things, *and* the fact that he's probably going to drag me into every situation he gets into, I'd like to head that off before I learn what the inside of a stone giant's stomach looks like, thank you very much."

Chuckling again, Ignitus eyed Sparx with a smile. "I will keep your words under advisement, Sparx. And keep an eye on your brother for me, will you? I don't think you realize just how much he relies on you. There is a reason that you were the first one to loop beside him, Sparx. He needs you far more than he needs me."

Classic Loop 36.4:

"What about this G'nasty G'norc character?"

"I'll tell you about Gnasty Gnorc. Gnasty is—"

The interview crew looked over their equipment for a greater part of the day with looks of confusion on all their faces. They weren't entirely sure what had happened, but their equipment had become unplugged and each of the prongs had been bent and melted together to the base. The director groaned, placing a paw over his face. To think, they had gone through all of that trouble setting up for nothing…

"I told you we should have gone with battery-operated equipment, but *noooooo.* The good old ways are the only true ways of being a director!"

"Oh, shut up, Steve!"

Not far off, on the top of one of the rolling green hills, Ember held a smug look on her face as she twirled the plug of a 'borrowed' camera in her paws. Spyro scowled, a flat expression on his face.

"Don't act so smug. Anyone could have thought of just unplugging the equipment!"

"So why didn't you?"

"Shut it!"

Ember giggled as Spyro placed a paw over his face.

Legend Loop 36.5: (Feat: AbZ)

Spyro's talons clicked on the familiar stone floor, lightly treading the path to the training room. While it was something he expected every local looper knew he did now and again, he just didn't feel the need to bother them over something that really was nothing more than his latent curiosity. That and, really, he did not get enough chances to practice with his combination elements in a controlled setting. This time, the possible outcome of Electricity and Ice held his interest.

From what he had reasoned about his elements, the combination should be both like and unlike the Lava-Magma element. The child of Fire and Earth held Fire's raw adaptability and Earth's stalwart pacing, represented by its heat and viscous nature, in that any particular form of Lava would be somewhat consistent in how viscous it was, depending on how much Earth, as opposed to pockets of water vapor, it consisted of.

However, it was still more smothering than Fire and more maneuverable than Earth.

The combination of Electricity and Ice...should be something cold, and more than a bit harsh. Both elements could easily cause accidental harm. Even when Ice healed, it tended to be accompanied by a stinging sensation. And the combined element would have a sense of surety about it.

Was that the best way to put it?

Ice was very powerfully into logic, and Electricity could nearly instantly pull up facts both important and inconsequential. If their combination was anything like that, it would almost surely be able to make very quick and accurate intuitive leaps—but, almost because of that, might just miss the most glaringly obvious facts.

Pulling himself out of his musings, Spyro began to gather the two elements. Taking deep breaths to help center himself, he began calling on Convexity to tie them together. It began slowly, the room he was in becoming minutely brighter. As Spyro placed more of the components in, the brightness grew.

Light.

Almost as soon as he'd come to that revelation, he felt something shift. Something seemed to be going wrong. The brightness fluctuated, shifted, then completely inverted, leaving Spyro in a room that was darker than when his training had begun and only continued to deepen.

Shadow.

Slowly letting his connection fade and the room return to its normal illumination, Spyro pondered what had occurred. Why had the element inverted itself? He thought he had been careful in the elemental ratios. And the others had been more forgiving on that, as well.

But that was it, wasn't it? Light was harsh. It was exacting, as both of its parents were. And if Volteer and Cyril were any indication, those two didn't play well together naturally, anyway. Thus, they were almost fighting the combination every step of the way. It would be almost natural that they would invert the element.

Which would actually make Shadow the more forgiving and easygoing of the two.

But then...why hadn't Cynder discovered the other side of Shadow?

Almost as soon as he'd thought the question, he knew the answer. The proportions, of course. Here he was, going in with prior experience combining elements and training with the four base elements. Not only that, but he was in a situation where he could afford to focus on exactly how much of each he put in. In combat, or whenever it was done naturally, there would be much more fluctuation, which of course would lead to the inversion of Light into Shadow.

Did that mean that Volteer had actually been inadvertently altering Cynder's proportions of Electricity and Ice, causing her control to break? Or was it that the inverted element was naturally defeated by its 'normal' counterpart, and that Volteer's high level of pure Electricity had been enough to mimic it, if only for a moment?

...Or could it have been that, somehow, impossibly, Volteer's Electricity had mixed in precisely the right amounts with Cynder's Shadow so as to 'return' it to the Light element, creating a 'wild' element that no one was in control of, thus causing it to harmlessly dissipate?

While the questions were interesting, Spyro didn't think he would have any way to quickly discover their answers. So, for now, he could only try to acquaint himself with both sides of his mate's main element.

Classic Loop 36.6: (Looking Towards the Future pt.3)

"...And this is nursery!" Ember said, a big grin on her face as she stood before the dome-like building. "This is where I volunteer most of my time, even in the loops."

Cynder held an awkward smile. Not long after Ember had discovered Cynder had looped into her baseline, she'd begun showing her around her home village. Even though Cynder had heard tales about this place from Ember before, she had never expected it to be so bright and cheery. Maybe the war in her own baseline had jaded her to the idea of a truly peaceful village, but it was something she found hard to take in.

"Want me to show you around the building?" Ember asked, looking back at the nursery. "I'd like for you to meet some of the younglings here. They're all so cute and full of energy, and I'd bet they'd be interested in meeting you!"

"Oh, u-uh…" Cynder muttered, raising a paw. "N-no. No, thank you."

"Hm?" Ember tilted her head. "Why not?"

"I…I don't think I'd be good around younglings," Cynder said, glancing away with a small frown on her face.

"What makes you say that?" Ember asked, walking over to look Cynder in the eyes.

"I just… It's a feeling I have," Cynder said, glancing the other way with a frown. "Can we please drop it?"

Ember frowned, leaning back and looking at Cynder with a concerned glint in her eyes. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes.

"Alright…" she said, shaking her head. "I was looking forward to showing you what I normally do during the baseline, though…"

"Sorry…" Cynder said, looking back at Ember. Raising a paw, she forced a small smile. "Surely there's some other stuff you haven't shown me yet, though, right?"

Ember looked up at Cynder from under her eyelashes and sat down. Placing a paw chin, she raised an eye-ridge. "Cynder? Is something bugging you?"

"What makes you say that?" Cynder asked, looking at Ember with a half-surprised expression on her face.

"I know you," Ember said, a slight grin on her face. "Maybe not as much as your Spyro does, but I know you well enough now to know when something's bugging you." She walked closer, her grin slowly turning into a frown. "You always have that disinterested, 'pay no attention to me' attitude about you when there's something bothering you."

Cynder blinked, looking a little dumbfounded, before she sighed and glanced down with a frown. "Am I really that transparent?"

"Not really," Ember said, walking over and placing a paw on her shoulder. "Just only when you're depressed. It's not good to keep things bottled up like this." She gave a slight smile. "Just remember, I'm always here to listen."

Cynder eyed her blankly before giving a sigh, lowering her head and closing her eyes.

"...It's your Spyro," she said, glancing back up with a frown. "Does he hate me?"

"What?" Ember asked, a dumbfounded look on her face. "What makes you ask that?"

"The look he gave me...at the start of the loop," Cynder said, returning her half-lidded gaze to the ground. "It's the look people usually give me during a baseline loop. It's not that this thing still

bugs me, mind you." She paused, closing her eyes. "It's just… Seeing it on Spyro's face…"

Ember blinked, then gave a sympathetic smile, rubbing Cynder's back as she looked her in the eyes.

"Cynder. Spyro doesn't hate you," she said, taking a deep breath. "He's just…not happy with the way you handled the Sorcerer. He views killing others as something that shouldn't be done, even as a last resort." Ember held a soft smile, getting up and looking at Cynder as she held one of her paws. "Besides, remember, this isn't your Spyro…"

"I know. He just… He looked so similar, at least in that moment," Cynder said, glancing away. "I don't think I'm ever going to get used to this…"

"You just really haven't gotten to know him yet. Soon enough, you'll start seeing him as a different dragon," Ember said, tilting her head with a innocent smile on her face. "...Granted, I'm still getting used to your Spyro as well, but still."

This got a mild chuckle out of Cynder, who glanced back up with a slightly more upbeat expression. Ember chuckled, giving a grin.

"There we go," she said, tilting her head with the grin still on her face. "It's like I've said several times before. You look a lot better when you smile."

Cynder let out a short, contented huff, looking at her with a smile. Getting up, she took a deep breath. Ember nodded, getting up and walking in front of her. Cynder paused, looking on with a confused expression.

"Hey, Ember," Cynder said, tilting her head.

"Yeah?" Ember asked, glancing back with a neutral expression.

"How come you aren't as upset about what I did as your Spyro is?" Cynder asked, blinking as she walked over to her.

Ember frowned, pausing as she glanced forward. Taking a deep breath, she glanced down, a blank expression on her face. "I guess it's because I can see why you wouldn't consider it out of line."

"Hm?"

Ember shook her head, glancing over to Cynder with a frown. "From what you told me, your baseline is rough, even when you manage to escape…that fate."

Cynder flinched slightly, looking away with a frown. Ember glanced upward, her expression neutral.

"Don't get me wrong, I don't view killing another being as something that should be done, even as a last resort, or even if someone is really just that horrible." Ember closed her eyes. "But...that's because, in this world, such a thing is considered taboo."

She glanced over to Cynder, a sympathetic frown on her face. "Judging from what you and your Spyro have said, and how you two never hesitate on the subject, such a thing in your world mustn't be as big a taboo as it is here, especially with that war going on." Ember tilted her head, closing her eyes again. "I don't know how I'd be able to handle being in your place…"

"You're a strong dragoness, Cynder," she said finally, looking over with a smile. "I hope you realize that."

Cynder paused, eying Ember blankly with only the occasional blink. A small smile began to appear on her face and she glanced down. "Well, after the twentieth time around, or so…"

The two dragonesses shared a slight chuckle, before Ember took a deep breath. Glancing over, she held a neutral expression as she placed a paw on Cynder's shoulder.

"Can you promise us this, though?" Ember asked, a worried frown on her face. "Can you try to hold back when fighting bad guys in our world? Not just for my Spyro, but for your own sake, too?"

Cynder blinked. Ember sighed, lowering her head as she looked at Cynder with a worried gaze.

"It's not just me and my Spyro who hold this view," she said, closing her eyes. "Pretty much everyone in our world considers killing to be one of the worst acts anyone can commit. You were lucky that the Sorcerer hadn't made himself known yet when you awoke, and thus we were able to cover it up..." Ember reopened her eyes, that worried frown still on her face. "If you were to do something like that when the others knew about it, there's no telling *how* they'd react, even if it was done to someone like the Sorceress."

"Well…" Cynder paused, biting her lower lip. It was such a simple request, yet when she had spent most of her life just fighting to survive…

"I'll…I'll try," she said, glancing away with a frown. "My combat style isn't exactly designed to be non-lethal, though."

"Hey, you managed to disable that mugger in the loop where we met without seriously injuring him, right?" Ember asked, giving a small smile. "If you want, you can let me and Spyro handle most of the things that usually pop up in our loop. You deserve a break from your baseline, after all."

Before Cynder could say anything, a wide grin found its way onto Ember's face. Quickly moving closer to Cynder, she giggled to herself.

"Hey, I have an idea!" she said, giving a grin. "I know a perfect place you can unwind and have some fun at the same time!"

"Okay… Where?" Cynder asked, tilting her head.

"Oh, you'll see!" Ember said, almost skipping as she darted away. Pausing quickly, she glanced back with the grin still on her face. "Just let me handle things with Spyro real quick! I'll be back before you know it!"

Cynder blinked, raising an eye-ridge as she watched Ember head off, apparently barely able to contain her excitement. Cynder held a blank expression, the feeling that she somehow had gotten in over her head beginning to creep up the back of her neck.

Legend Loop 36.7: (Feat: AbZ)

Spyro didn't like this part of the loop. Since he often had already freed Cynder at this point, even if she wasn't awake, the loop would railroad Ignitus's disappearance through an attack on the temple while Spyro was at Munitions Forge. This left Volteer and Cyril injured both in body and spirit, and the mood would even get to Terrador on some level. All Spyro could do was bring Ignitus back as soon as he could and hope that, next time, someone else was awake to foil the attack.

Ducking under a dummy's wild swing, Spyro tried to refocus on his training.

"You are worried about Ignitus?" the Earth Guardian rumbled from the side of the room.

"Somewhat," Spyro hedged honestly. "It's more Volteer and Cyril that have me worried."

"Those two have endured worse, and doubtless will again," Terrador replied. His words weren't said in a way that was overtly comforting, but Spyro knew his teacher well, and the unspoken "with both Ignitus and myself, at the very least, by their sides" was something he heard clearly.

"Though, if I may pick your mind," Terrador said after a time as Spyro flung a different dummy around as a flail, "why is it that you are not worried about Ignitus?"

No accusation, just curiosity.

"Call it a feeling. I just think that Ignitus will make it though this ordeal without much issue," Spyro replied. *'It's the end of the loop that I'm not so sure about.'*

"A vision from the Ancestors?"

"Perhaps," Spyro allowed. This was a bit unusual.

Then he heard Terrador mutter something that he hadn't expected. "They do seem to be handing them out like candy."

"Master Terrador?" Spyro asked, spinning around both to face Terrador in surprise and also to leverage the torque to rip a dummy's head from its shoulders.

"It is nothing you have to worry about, Spyro. It seems as though they have seen fit to give me a vision of what might be, as well. And while I do not like all of it, it comforts me to see that you and Cynder both will grow into a fine pair of dragons."

"May I ask what the vision was?" Spyro asked, trying to reign in his excitement. Just because Terrador didn't receive any visions in baseline didn't mean that he couldn't now.

"The whole of it seems too long to recount now, but know that, if it is true, war is coming and we must be ready."

Spyro sighed as he tripped another dummy and hit it hard enough that, had it been alive, he would have shattered its skull.

Giving in to the guilt, Terrador continued. "At the end, you came up with a plan to end the war and stop a great calamity. It required you, Cynder and Ignitus to pass through a place no one else could go.

For a time, we were unsure of its success, then my vision-self felt the earth itself shriek and wail in pain as it seemed to tear itself apart. Then came a golden light and all was as before. And we waited for your return, simply knowing somehow that you had survived. And that is where it ended."

Looking back at the young dragon, Terrador saw that he had turned unnaturally pale.

"I never realized the earth was in such pain," Spyro murmured.

"Spyro, calm yourself. It hasn't happened yet. And if I have anything to say about it, it won't come to that, anyway."

Backing away, Spyro began shaking his head. "No, it already has happened and it will happen again, and again."

Catching up to him, Terrador corralled the shivering dragon with his body. "Spyro, I told you, it was just a vision. And I—"

"It wasn't a vision!" Spyro cut in. "Visions don't tell you everything that will come in four years," he added softly before trying to coil back in on himself.

"Then what was it? Do you believe that I really have come back in time?" the Earth Guardian asked, slightly disturbed that Spyro had known the timeframe of his vision.

"Yes."

Somehow, that one word, such a simple assertion, seemed to shake Terrador more than anything. Did Spyro truly believe such things were possible?

"You and I are experiencing a phenomenon known to the greater community for which it is happening as 'looping.' Those to whom it is happening are known as 'loopers.'"

"Others?" Terrador asked.

"My brother Sparx, Cynder and Ignitus are also looping, but loopers aren't always aware of time's repetitions. They aren't always 'awake' to the loops. Right now, it seems like only you and I are awake at the moment."

"You do realize that does not truly help your case, young one."

"Then perhaps these would be more appropriate?" Spyro asked, pulling out his weapons and armor.

Terrador stared at the metallic and wooden objects that had just appeared from nowhere. The weapons were unfamiliar to him, but even a cursory glance revealed some things about them. First, they were well-used. Impressions in the leather wrappings showed that something had surrounded and pressed hard against the leather over a very large period of time. Second, they were very well-maintained. Terrador could smell a hint of lacquer and oil emanating from the strange objects. Third, and partially hidden by the second, was that they were absolutely ancient. Terrador had never seen anything as old as these were, much less something so old yet in such good condition.

He didn't know the names of the objects Spyro was showing him, but he could see scratches and dings that spoke of use in battle. Looking over the longest piece of wood, reinforced with wooden bands, he saw that it had an enormous crack running along nearly one quarter of its full length. Studying the wound further, Terrador realized that it had once been much larger.

As he looked over at Spyro, the smaller dragon explained. "When Malefor and I clashed during that loop, we both channeled our fullest power into our weapons and shields. I think I surprised him when, despite cracking as badly as my lance did, not only did it stay together, but it also didn't leak any of my power and pierced his armor. I have been trying to fix it, but I was advised that too much power at once might shatter it. I can still use it perfectly fine, though."

"May I see?" Terrador asked. At Spyro's nod, he moved back to the edge of the room and Spyro back to the center.

Standing on his back legs, Spyro summoned his sword and shield and waited as the dummies began to charge him. He closed his eyes and sucked in a breath. Terrador felt as though the air froze for a moment. Then Spyro exhaled, opened his eyes, and adjusted his grip. Terrador noted that the unfamiliar weapon had a new sheen to it, but he was unable to study it further, as the metal object blurred into motion and Spyro himself turned into a veritable whirlwind of destruction.

The objects that Spyro carried flitted around one another, striking down their fair share of foes and blocking strikes that would have been painful or deadly had they landed in a real fight. And, through it all, Spyro was a purple snake at the center of a storm of metal.

Again, the world seemed to pause as Terrador made out a moment where Spyro's grip slackened. Focusing in, he watched as the weapon switched out with another, this one much more flexible. Then Spyro was back in the center of the fray, only this time Terrador could feel something happen just before each blow with the new weapon landed.

Watching, he saw Spyro calling upon the Earth at a critical point in his swing, increasing the force with which he impacted his opponent. That kind of reflexive use of Earth did not come automatically, even for the most gifted of protégées. In addition, there was no hesitation in Spyro's movements. Both things spoke of years of familiarity with both the elements and the strange weapons.

As the last dummy of the wave came at Spyro, Terrador watched him flip over the target, flick his weapon out, and grab the weighted end with the claw that had been bearing the large, strangely-shaped piece of metal— painted purple with a golden dragonfly at its center —this entire time. Twisting to land on his hind legs, Spyro then used the improvised noose to slam his latest target head-first into the ground.

As the third wave came, Spyro changed weapons yet again, this time to the one he had called a 'lance.' Terrador watched as he brought it parallel to the ground before erupting into a missile of fire. The flaming trail twisted and spun about the room, each pass striking down at least one enemy, and each turn only a wingtip from the walls.

Then, even faster than they had materialized, the flames vanished and Spyro reappeared, skidding along the training-room floor. Only, this time, he had seemingly forsaken the largest piece of metal for his latest weapon. Instead, he was now holding a bent piece of wood that had both ends tied together with a metal string. Along one of his back legs was tied a pouch which held shorter lengths of wood.

Terrador noted that the fiery missile from before had left one of the training dummies from the previous wave unharmed. However, he didn't believe for an instant that it wasn't intentional on Spyro's part.

Reaching down, Spyro pinched three of the shorter lengths between the knuckles of his talons and pulled them up, flicking one up against the longer piece of wood as he did so. Then the remaining dummy from the third wave was on him, swinging wildly, trying its best to hit what might as well have been purple smoke. Terrador felt a slight tingle permeate the air. Sparks began to crackle along the length of the largest piece of wood and its string. When Spyro sidestepped the attacking dummy's latest swing, his eyes locked onto one of the other advancing dummies, and he pulled the shorter length back and released.

A blast of electricity rang out as the target dropped like a stone, but Spyro had already drawn and fired on his next target. And so it went, with Spyro picking off the dummies one by one at his own leisure, while he simultaneously dodged the training dummy's advances with its club. Then, when that was the only adversary left on the field, Spyro twirled the wood in his grip around so that the string was facing the outside. As he dodged the dummy's latest attempt, he flicked the weapon so that the string was behind the back of its head

while the length of wood was in front of it. Then, with the string still crackling, Spyro yanked back.

Terrador watched the dummy's head fall to the ground, both impressed and shocked.

It was obvious that Spyro had trained long and hard with both the strange weapons and with his elements if he was so proficient at such a strange style. And yet, that training was at odds with his age.

"That was quite impressive, Spyro," Terrador said, watching as Spyro's latest weapon vanished again. The purple dragon smiled before beginning to circle around the room, inspecting the fired projectiles where they lay on the floor after the dummies had burst into gems. "Who was it that taught you to wield the elements so proficiently?"

"You did, Master Terrador," Spyro replied, turning to look at him. "You, Ignitus, Cyril and Volteer have taught me nearly everything I know about the elements. Even if you cannot recall it, any 'talent' that I seem to have with the Earth is a product of your teachings and many, many years of practice." Pausing to collect himself, Spyro drew himself up and continued. "There is much that I do not know about the elements, Master Terrador. I would be honored if you would continue to teach me its secrets."

Terrador frowned. "If you have been 'looping' for as long as you say, why would there still be things that you do not know? I would think that, if your words are true, you should have had time enough to master all four elements."

"It's not that I couldn't have done so, but..." Spyro turned away briefly in embarrassment. "I don't want to learn something because you think it's the only way I can survive. That I'm not worthy of it, but I need it. I don't want to learn the more advanced techniques from you because I was born with purple scales. I want to learn those things because you believe that I'm ready to learn them."

"I believe that I understand, at least in part, where you are coming from," Terrador said. "But can you give me some time to collect myself before I give you my answer? You have given me much to think about, and I do not wish to make rash judgments."

"Of course," Spyro answered shakily. "I'll... I have to go, anyway..." Fishing one more item from his subspace, he showed it to Terrador. "This is a book that has information on the loops. It might explain things better than I have."

"I see," Terrador rumbled tentatively, drawing the ancient thing towards him. Noticing that Spyro was about to leave, he called after him. "The Night of Eternal Darkness."

Spyro jolted and turned to face the Earth Guardian.

"I will have made my decision by then. Now, go well, young dragon. And please, save my friend." Terrador watched as Spyro hastily nodded and all but bolted out the door in enthusiasm. He allowed himself a small smile before turning his attention to the latest item that his 'student' had brought to his attention.

Classic Loop 36.8: (Feat: GoldenGriffiness)

Spyro stared at his long feet, feeling one powerful back leg.

"...Why am I a kangaroo?"

"I dunno." Sparx shrugged. "Why would you *not* be a kangaroo? You know what Ihy's like. My question is, why am I your joey and why do I look like Roo?!" He crossed his arms with a perturbed frown that sent Spyro into a fit of laughter. "...What?"

"I can't believe I'm— *hah!* —saying this— *hah!* —but you're friggin' adorable!"

"I feel the need to point out that, if I am in here"—he pointed at the pouch that held him—"you are Spyra again."

"...Crap."

"And my mother."

Legend Loop 36.9: (Feat: GoldenGriffiness)

Spyro's eye twitched as he stared down at his reflection in a pool of clear water. His wings were horribly stiff and he was convinced that Ihy was drunk again.

The 'purple' dragon had become the 'crystal' dragon in this loop. The slight shine off his Flashwing-style wings was terribly nauseating. Sparx—who, thank the ancestors, was not awake—was currently checking his teeth in the reflection of Spyro's crystals.

"Oh, Spyro~!"

Spyro twitched, hearing that all-too-familiar voice. Quickly getting to his paws, he wondered if anyone would think less of him if he let Malefor succeed in blowing up the world this loop…

Classic Loop 36.10:

Spyro looked around the open fields of Stone Hill with a scowl on his face, his eye twitching as he darted back and forth across the plains. Sparx had long since decided to just lay down and catch some sleep. It didn't take long before Spyro slowed to a crawl and stopped, taking a deep breath.

"I've been through countless loops. I've done this countless times. I've been to places *way* more complicated than Stone Hill…"

He got up on his hind legs, throwing his forelegs to the sky as fire raged in his eyes.

"SO WHY THE HECK DOES THIS KEEP HAPPENING?!"

Spyro growled and plopped onto the ground with a dull look on his face. Slowly, almost reluctantly, he pulled his atlas out of his subspace and opened it to the right page. The gem counter continued to taunt him, still stubbornly displaying its three hundred and ninety-nine out of four hundred gems.

(A/N: So… Long time, no update.

For those wondering, this was mostly the result of a combination of real life stress and computer problems. Thankfully, Goldy is helping pitch in with some of the filler chapters, so these should hopefully be more frequent from now on, and I've mostly gotten the latter sorted out now. Still… Hard to write when you're more concerned about real life worries and such.

Don't worry about me, though. I'm mostly taking it in stride, even though my luck went to poop as of late. I'm hoping things will pick up soon, but…updates may remain sporadic for a bit until everything is sorted out.

Loop titles:

36.1: You know, Ed, I heard milk works wonders, even for dragonflies…

36.2: Well, when you don't know who your biological parents are…

36.3: They become masters of mystical and insanely dangerous combat abilities so fast these days…

36.4: It's their fault for still using outdated filing equipment in this day and age.

36.5: Just be glad you didn't cause a loop crash, Spyro. Forcing Cyril and Volteer to play nice with each other is like asking Malefor *not* to blow up the planet.

36.6: On the plus side, Ember's idea of fun likely won't mean humiliating someone in the process, unlike Legend Sparx. Hopefully.

36.7: Only Terrador could react to the loops with a 'huh, that's pretty weird...' kind of attitude and then go about the rest of it like nothing's wrong.

36.8: Meanwhile, a Gnorc is fighting a bad eye-twitch over trying to deal with a dragon who talks in an Australian accent that would make Steve Irwin roll over in his grave.

36.9: If Legend Spyro wasn't Crystal Dragon Jesus before…

36.10: Don't worry, Spyro. I'm sure anyone who's attempted to one hundred percent the Classic trilogy feels your pain…

Remember to leave a review because it really helps us out and improve, and if you're interested in submitting your own snip to the compilation, check out the official Spyro loops Forum on FF.N.)

Roaring Flame (!)

(Fused Loop 1.1 continued) (Feat: TokoWH, AbZ, Ukelele) (Beta-Read by Riverstyxx)

"What?" Classic asked, looking back towards the red dragon in confusion.

"You heard me," Flame said, a stoic expression on his face as strode forward past the group of loopers. "There's still one dragon who hasn't taken your test."

Classic held a confused expression as he looked towards the group, each of them looking back at him blankly. Ember looked nervous, glancing between Classic and Flame. Her gaze finally came to firmly rest on Classic, who gave a nod and quickly followed behind Flame.

"Flame?"

The red dragon aimed a backward glance, seeing Classic crook his claw at him.

"C'mere. We need to talk." Classic beckoned from the dojo's door.

After the loopers' perplexed stares registered, Flame reluctantly followed Classic out into the hall. Almost as soon as they had stepped out, a different door opened near where the guardians were standing.

A dragon with a very long mustache crept in, leaning heavily on a hefty walking stick. Legend recalled seeing other elders doing something similar in this loop, but this one seemed to move much more...'purposefully' was the first word that came to mind. Glancing over to Cynder, he noted the slight narrowing of her eyes. She had noticed it as well.

"Ragnar," Thomas addressed the newcomer stiffly. "You are late. By more than thirty minutes, in fact."

"Apologies, Thomas, I'm afraid these old bones aren't quite what they used to be," the other dragon replied, a slight sharp glint in his eyes. "It seems my body just didn't feel up to trying to keep up with the whippersnappers today. How did that go, by the way? I can see three of them here, so it doesn't look like you harmed them *too* terribly."

"How unfortunate, then," Cyril retorted, scowling, "that it looks like none of us are in any condition to give the last one his chance to go with the other four."

"I'm sorry, Cyril, it seems my ears have taken leave again. I thought you said ' *go with* ' the other four. Surely you meant ' *stay back with'* ?"

"You heard correctly," Terrador cut in, sharply. "Ignitus's grandchild met me in combat and proved himself. His twin did the same for Red. The dark-scaled one did so with Volteer, and the pink one with Cyril."

"What did they do to earn that?" Ragnar asked with genuine curiosity.

"They fulfilled the criteria of the match to the letter and spirit," Thomas replied. "Beyond that is something that you would know had you come at the appropriate time, as is asked of *any* guardian."

There was a sudden huff that echoed out all the way into the hall where Flame and Classic were. Classic glanced back with a raised eye-ridge, the biting annoyance that came with it sounding all too familiar and sending a chill down his spine. Looking back, Flame lowered his brows in frustration. The door slid shut behind him and Flame turned to see Classic pinching the bridge of his snout.

"You know why I called you out here, right?"

The stoic manner never left Flame as he argued his case. "I know what happened earlier, and—"

"You're a good tour guide, Flame, but Ihy probably found out where Mal's hiding by now."

"But I can fight, and I'll show you if you let me."

A sceptical frown creased Classic's maw. "Is that so? Then, of course, I should ignore the fact that you were hiding in a closet during the invasion."

"That doesn't—"

"I should also forget about us having to chase you through the middle of a collapsing subway." Classic's brow lifted. "Yeah, that sounds reasonable."

Flame let his head hang as he tried to respond to the evidence presented against him. Classic waited expectantly for a response, until he finally found his words. "Did I tell you I've met Malefor before?"

"Yeah, at the library," said Classic as his frown diminished.

"...When I walked into that office, I could tell he'd seen a lot. More than anyone should have to see."

Letting Flame continue, Classic's expression shifted from doubt to concern.

"Then, when I offered him reading lessons, he felt like he'd made his first friend in centuries," Flame recounted, checking Classic's expression with a stolen glance. "But when I told him about the Great Sea Dragon and the relationship us hy— *dragons* have with water, everything just fell apart."

From there, Flame's voice began to rise. "You get it, right? It's *my* fault that Malefor's out there killing with his machines! I made him

feel like a failure and now he's trying to eliminate anything that threatens him! And you know what he's afraid of?"

Classic picked up the exchange from there. "You told him we're related to Waterians and that set him off."

Nodding, Flame ended his testimony. "Now you see why I have to do this."

The purple dragon mulled over Flame's story, feeling uneasy about its truthfulness, but unable to detect anything other than the occasional stumbling over words. "...You sure you want to do this?"

Flame's determined stare told Classic all he needed to know.

A defeated sigh left his maw. "Well, I'm letting Ember come with us and I would've never done that before this loop. Maybe you'll surprise me, too."

With that, Flame pushed the dojo's door open, hurrying back toward the arena, while Classic followed to sit at the sidelines. As he made his way back to the group, he couldn't help but think, *'Maybe I'm just being paranoid. Flame couldn't be lying, could he?'*

It was then that Classic paused. *'Wait… This loop?'*

Classic watched as Flame stood across from Ragnar, a determined expression on his face. He couldn't have been…?

"Unbelievable," Ragnar said, glancing back at his fellow guardians with a frown on his face. "To think... The lot of you, bested by children."

"These are no normal children, Ragnar," Terrador shot back, giving him a stern look. "With how much you pride yourself on your chi abilities, I would think you'd at least know how to sense the energy within them."

"Are you mocking my abilities?" Ragnar asked, shooting Terrador a cold raised brow as he held his staff firmly in hand. "I could sense them just fine, but that still does not change the fact that all four of you were bested by younglings."

"Appearances can be deceiving, Ragnar," Cyril said, a flat expression on his face that quickly turned into a smirk. "For example, how one can appear old and wise, but really he's just a conceited old fart down under all that."

"I sure hope you're not implying what I think you're implying," Ragnar said, giving Cyril a stern glance. "Because I know a certain dragon who tries to keep a regal air about himself, but deep down he's nothing but a raging egotistical maniac controlled by his desperate need to make himself important."

On the other side of the arena, the group watched on blankly. Legend Sparx grinned, doing his best to suppress a chuckle.

"Ooh, shots fired," he muttered, glancing over to Legend with a smirk.

Legend merely shook his head in response before glancing back at the two dragons, who were giving each other the evil eye.

"Well, at least I have something to be proud about," Cyril said, glancing at Ragnar with a look of indifference on his face. "Ice is one of the oldest and most highly regarded elements out there, thought to have come into existence alongside fire itself." Cyril raised a paw to his chest, closing his eyes. "It is elegant, graceful and deadly, unlike that hack-job of unrefined energy you call an 'element.' "

Cyril barely opened his eyes, looking at Ragnar with an indifferent shrug. "Any ruffian with half a brain can throw pure energy onto his claws and call it an element. It takes a true and disciplined dragon to master the majesty that is ice."

"It wasn't thought to have come into existence alongside fire. It was thought to have come *after* fire," Ragnar said, narrowing his eyes. "As in, second best. And just because it's a species' exclusive element does not make it any different from an element anyone can learn. If anything, ice is far below chi. Anyone may be able to use chi, but few can master it, and it is far more efficient and deadly than *your* element, which can be beaten with a hotplate. Any ice dragon can throw around ice chunks, but very few elite dragons can create chi blasts without even moving."

"Check it out, it's Ragnar verses Ragnar," Classic muttered, looking on as he gave Legend a slight nudge.

"Or Cyril verses Cyril," Cynder added, watching with a raised eye-ridge.

Legend huffed, watching the unfolding events, the guardians slowly becoming more and more passive-aggressive as their not-so-unapparent argument continued. He could hardly believe it. Never once had he thought he'd ever meet another dragon quite like Cyril, to put it frankly. While Ragnar seemed to be trying to give off an air of wisdom rather than regality, it was clear that he took great pride in this 'chi' Legend had heard so much about.

"Well then, at least I have a natural element! The only reason you got into Dragon Kata was because you had no other choice!"

"I'd rather have no element and be a master in Dragon Kata than be locked into a hack of an element that makes me act like I have an icicle up my—"

"Enough!" Terrador said, his rumbling voice finally breaking the argument as he stepped forward and gave them both a stern glare. "You two are guardians, for ancestors' sake! Act like it!"

Legend's expression went flat. The key word in his thought process was 'try.'

Volteer did his best to suppress a chuckle and even Red held an amused smirk on his face. Cyril and Ragnar glared contemptuously at each other, but Ragnar was the first to break it by quickly turning away with a scowl.

"Bah!" he spat, walking away. "Fine then. I guess I'll just have to prove it by doing something even your oh-so-precious ice element failed to accomplish."

Expression unwavering, Malefor looked through Flame's eyes with a smirk. To think, the guardians were acting like younglings. If that was what he was up against, then it shouldn't be too much of a problem, but that didn't mean he shouldn't keep his wits about him.

His little messing with Classic's head should be enough to keep them from butting in. Granted, he had no idea if Flame really was a looper like the others, but that was irrelevant. That line would be enough for him to take some liberties with the whelp's powers. Granted, it was best not to go too insane, either, lest he rouse suspicion.

From what he knew about Flame—most obviously—he was a fire dragon. It wouldn't be too unbelievable if he took Flame's abilities with it to their limits, or at least close to it. Other than that, though, he was unsure what Flame was capable of. Magic was something that most dragons seemed to be capable of using, regardless of what elemental alignment they fell into. Chi appeared to be another one, but that was an 'element' discovered during his time in imprisonment, and thus one he was unfamiliar with—a fact that he knew he'd have to keep in mind when fighting a dragon who specialized in it.

Multiple elements didn't seem to be uncommon in dragons this day and age, as Cynder had shown, but he'd likely have to make it an element that would be believable for the whelp to have learned through some means, and shadow might raise a few brows…

Malefor huffed. He'd cross that bridge when he got to it. For now, he needed to gauge what his opponent was capable of, and the exact

extent of what this 'chi' entailed.

Ragnar looked down at Flame with a stoic expression on his face, staff at his side. Immediately, he closed his eyes, channeling his chi, which flowed out around him. Though it was likely unneeded, if what the other guardians had said was true, then it was best to get an idea of what this whelp's powers were. Using chi to tap into and sense the elements and the opponent's level of chi was the basis of Dragon Kata, and while it was possible to disguise certain abilities, he doubted Flame had mastered that art yet, even if he was a so-called 'looper.'

Ragnar took a deep breath. Sure enough, right off the bat, he could feel the fury of flames inside him and not much else, just like he had predicted. Ragnar huffed. Just like he…

He paused, raising an eye-ridge. He could feel Flame's presence, but…there was something else there. He wasn't sure who or what it was, but it wasn't natural. Of that, he was certain. Ragnar ran his claws through his long mustache, keeping a firm eye on Flame.

"What's the matter?" Flame said, giving a confident smirk. "You seemed so sure of yourself when you were berating the guardians for losing to children earlier. You losing your nerve because you don't want to be shown up by a whelp?"

Ragnar scowled, sensing an air of enjoyment from the presence inside Flame at that remark. He held his staff in front of him, returning to his stoic expression. Letting the spirit get under his scales was probably exactly what it wanted. Ragnar had no idea why it had taken residence in the whelp, or why it was insistent on staying with the group, but Ragnar could feel in his gut that something was not right there. An ordinary sparring match, this likely was not…

"To give you a fighting chance," Ragnar said, closing his eyes. "I will let you strike first."

"What?" Ember muttered from the sidelines, raising an eye-ridge. "He's not even going to pay attention?"

Ragnar smirked, hearing the comment despite it barely rising above a whisper. He let his chi flow out towards Ember, able to sense a low amount of chi within her. He was unsure how she had learned about chi, but, from that comment alone, it was clear she only knew how to channel it into her claws at most. An amateur mistake. Whoever taught it to her clearly didn't have a good grasp on it themselves. Ragnar made a mental note to discuss this with her once all was said and done. He didn't like just anyone learning Dragon Kata, especially his special blend of it, but it was an insult to the style to have some random nincompoop out there teaching others improper Dragon Kata.

Malefor narrowed his eyes, keeping a stoic expression on Flame as he observed his opponent. There was no way Ragnar would leave himself open like that, unless he was confident he could block any attack. Indeed, Malefor needed to expect, no, he *knew* Ragnar would block his opening blow. He didn't know much about chi, but he needed to be cautious—and probably not attempt to get too crazy right off the bat, either. Ragnar was testing what Malefor's minion was capable of and, in turn, he needed to take this opportunity to test that himself.

Immediately, Ragnar sensed flames welling up inside Flame, curling into a ball. A basic fireball? Maybe the whelp wasn't as intimidating as he'd thought.

A chill went down his spin. Once again, he could sense the presence of something other than Flame, a sudden surge of power shooting through the whelp. Ragnar quickly retracted his earlier thoughts. The fireball was a distraction, a common veteran fire-dragon tactic. He could easily block the fireball, but it was what Flame—no, the presence fueling Flame—would do next that had him worried.

The fireball spat out of Flame's mouth and, not a second later, the whelp was off, darting to the side at the same speeds Cynder had

displayed in her battle, circling around towards Ragnar's backside. Ragnar was quick to swat away the attack and spin around, raising his staff as Flame jumped towards him. Quickly opening his wings, Flame took to the air and somersaulted over Ragnar, letting down a rain of fire. Following the beat, Ragnar raised his hand, a luminescent blue barrier of chi forming over him and blocking the attack.

As Flame dropped to the ground, he charged again. Ragnar swung his staff, only for Flame to jump and land atop it. He opened his maw, an orange glow radiating from within his throat. Quickly, Ragnar pulled his staff away, only for Flame jump back and let loose a storm of small fireballs. Ragnar acted fast, putting his staff in front of him and twirling it, letting his chi flow through it until it glowed pale blue, punting the mini-fireballs away, where they soon fizzled out in the open air.

As Classic watched the battle, his jaw dropped and his eyes wide, he found himself at a loss for words. Finally, one thought came to mind.

"Holy crap," he muttered, fighting the urge to blink in case he missed some more craziness from Flame.

"Is that really my brother out there?" Ember blurted out, mirroring Classic's expression as she glanced over towards the group.

On the other side of the arena, Terrador merely glanced at the match between Flame and Ragnar. In all honesty, it didn't hold his attention. From what he'd understood, Flame wasn't actually a 'looper,' but someone who had been in the right—or wrong—place at the right time to get dragged along. He might have had a trick or two, but it shouldn't have been anything that Ragnar couldn't handle. And if Ragnar couldn't... Well, he needed someone to knock him off his self-appointed pedestal now and then.

Instead, Terrador focused on the dragon that he had fought earlier, keeping only enough focus on the fight before him to count the number of stances and maneuvers that Ragnar used. Ignitus's

grandson followed the fight, a frown stretched over his face. It didn't seem that he had encountered the upper levels of Dragon Kata yet. It would be interesting. At the fourth count, Legend's eyes briefly flashed before clouding over as his eye-ridges furrowed.

It was the sixth move that saw his eyes shine. Terrador had to smile. If 'Ro' ever had the need to face Ragnar, he would not doubt the outcome. Though, he did wonder, would the purple youngling have been able to dissect Ragnar's moves so quickly *in* a fight? From what he had seen, he would give him two more moves in a fight proper.

Terrador turned his attention back to the fight to see Flame reaching out, trying to score a blow on Ragnar's side. Internally, Terrador sighed. The young dragon had overextended. Ragnar would slam him into the dirt before the blow connected. Sure enough, Terrador saw Ragnar's reply coming in swiftly.

'Abort the attack,' Terrador silently counseled.

A wave of surprise ripped through the observers as, impossibly, Flame's strike hit and Ragnar's *missed* . Some of the others cheered, but the dragons shared a look that asked *"Did that just happen?"* and *"Was that you?"* all at once.

Ragnar recoiled with a grunt, grasping the area where he'd been struck with a scowl on his face. Flame hit the ground on all fours with a smirk on his face, fire dancing around his claws as he waited for Ragnar's next move. The group could only look on in shock as Flame danced in place, mocking Ragnar while he let out a chuckle. Classic Sparx glanced over to Classic Spyro, scratching his head with a confused look on his face.

"I know Flame kind of looks like ya, but since when did he become your long lost twin?" he asked, looking back at the battle with eyes wide.

Classic blinked before glancing over to Ember with a stern expression. "Embs."

Ember half-glanced over, finding it hard to take her eyes off the battlefield as Flame darted around, leaving a trail of fire in his wake. "Yeah?"

"Has Flame ever let on that he might be looping? Or at least shown signs that he might?" Classic asked, glancing back towards the sparring match as Flame jumped atop Ragnar's staff, giving the guardian a slap on the snout and jumping back before Ragnar could grab him.

"I…I don't think so," Ember said, glancing over with a frown. "Outside of variants, Flame never really changed his routine each loop, unless someone interfered with it somehow."

"Maybe he's a stealth looper?" Classic Sparx asked, raising a brow. "You know, like those Star…walker…something-or-other loopers."

"Maybe, but I don't see why he'd hide it," Ember said, closing her eyes and shaking her head. "Especially from his own sister. I would have thought that, at least, he'd have asked me about it in one of the many loops he might have been through."

Classic huffed, keeping a close eye on Flame. Something was up, looper or not.

Ragnar lashed out with his staff again and watched as, once more, he just couldn't reach the thing overshadowing the whelp he was facing. Narrowing his eyes in frustration, the elder dragon tried to back-step out of the range of Flame's next strike. Again, he watched the impossible as Flame's claws seemed to reach through distance and land. So it wasn't just that this power was able to affect the world around the user; the user could also be altered. Interesting. There weren't many powers quite like that. Still, he had to find a way to stop this farce.

As he twisted his staff around again, the weapon took on a blue sheen. When he swung it forth, it seemed to shorten to the point where it would just miss for a third time. Suddenly, chi burst from Ragnar's staff, hitting Flame square in the chest and causing the smaller dragon to gasp in pain and shock. Immediately, the warping effect stopped and the butt of Ragnar's staff met Flame's already bruised ribcage, throwing the fire dragon back.

Ragnar watched the whelp struggle to his feet, unsure if striking now would have been to fall for a trap or even be seen as fair play by the other guardians. He felt a bead of sweat run down his face. That was strange. Even with the surprises that the thing overshadowing the whelp had shown, the mental and physical effort still shouldn't have been enough for him to start sweating. Not unless...

Opening his senses further, Ragnar felt an attack coming from his back left. Whipping his staff around, he barely managed to smash away another fireball that seemed to have come from nowhere. Ragnar frowned, staring at what seemed to be empty air, before closing his eyes—preparing himself for the next attack.

The others in the room had begun to notice the unnatural heat. Then Classic noticed that Flame was suddenly not lying on the ground anymore. "What the heck?"

"He's not..." Legend muttered.

"He is," Cynder replied.

"Mind explaining for everyone else?" Classic asked, annoyed.

"Flame is using heat manipulation," Legend began, sighing and closing his eyes. "It's high-level fire manipulation that I've only seen Ignitus use a few times before this. By using the heat to alter how light passes through the air, one can render themselves invisible or even cause phantasmal adversaries to appear."

"So then Flame is winning?" Ember asked hopefully.

"No," Cynder replied, frowning as she watched Ragnar slowly turn around the room. "Flame lost the moment he used that technique."

"How's that work?" Classic Sparx snarked.

"The reason Ignitus and most every fire dragon doesn't use it in every battle is because of the energy needed to maintain the minimum temperature for it to be viable. Using their fury, a fire dragon could bring the nearby battlefield up to the correct temperature, but, if it's a wide open plain or open sky, it will dissipate within two seconds. Maintaining the temperature would knock them out, if they were lucky. So the only areas where you could teach or learn about it would have the rough equivalent temperature as just above the caldera of an active volcano."

"But we're enclosed here, so it should be fine, right?" Ember wondered, looking around at the earth walls.

Cynder shook her head. "No, this building is like the ones from our loop. We don't have things like 'central air conditioning,' so our structures are built so that heat in one area of the building causes airflow both around the building and the outside, keeping the temperature relatively stable."

"In English, please?"

"Flame has to heat and maintain a much larger area than it first appears," Legend explained, shooting the dragonfly a dirty look. "And the longer that he tries to keep the heat up, the more energy he loses. The heat is sapping Ragnar's energy too, but Flame is losing his faster. All Ragnar has to do is not give Flame an opening and he wins. And Ragnar seems to know where the attacks are coming from, even if he doesn't know where Flame is specifically."

Ragnar took a deep breath, doing his best to not let the intense heat of Flame's attack distract him. Keeping his eyes closed, he stood his ground with his hind paws tense against the arena floor. Letting his chi flow around him, he could sense the traces of Flame darting

between the fires he had kicked up. How the whelp could pull off such an advanced technique, Ragnar didn't know, but nor did he particularly care. Even if he was a master at it, Flame had just spelled his doom. Sooner or later, he'd run out of steam, allowing Ragnar to end this.

Spinning around, Ragnar kicked up a chi barrier to block a sudden burst of flames coming at him, then quickly spun his staff at the other side to block another. Flame's essence darted all around him, looking for an opening as he kept tossing flames at him. If nothing else, he was quick, but that would not help him.

Ragnar grunted, his mouth hanging slightly agape as he felt a sudden surge in Flame's energy not long after it had begun to lessen. How was that even possible? Flame should have been feeling the effects of his technique by now, not getting stronger from it! What *was* this whelp? These loopers may have been deceptively strong, from what the others had said, but even they couldn't break the laws of causality!

Malefor, from behind the curtain of Flame, narrowed his eyes, letting some of his energy flow into Flame to kept the attack alive. A slight hint of Flame's essence rang out, an air of enjoyment coming from the whelp as he darted between the fires he had created. Malefor smirked. Flame was enjoying the fact that he was getting to fight at a guardian level, even if he wasn't aware someone else was pulling the strings.

Still, though, he could see the slight scowl on Flame's face and hear his panting as his scales began to burn. Even with a fire dragon's ability to control fire and body-temperature, Flame was starting to overheat from the strain. Malefor frowned, a slight look of sympathy on his face. Reaching up a paw, Malefor let his ice element ring out, cooling his vessel's scales and letting him keep up the assault.

While this would allow Flame to keep going for longer, Ragnar was still proving to be a problem. His own unfamiliarity with chi was causing this match to go on far longer than needed, and, if he let it

go on any longer, then there was a higher chance Ragnar would pull something out that he would have no idea how to counter. He couldn't allow that to happen. If fire alone wasn't going to get him anywhere, then maybe another element would. Which element he could give Flame that wouldn't rouse suspicions, however, was the real question…

Flame charged forward, watching as Ragnar spun around and raised the barrier once again. Flame smirked, charging to the left with Ragnar quickly following in tow. If it wasn't for the fact that he wasn't sure how much more his proxy could handle, Malefor could have easily won this battle of attrition. However, a new change of pace was needed if he wanted to win.

Spinning around Ragnar, Flame began to move quicker and quicker in a circle as he let the fire slowly die down, only leaving enough to conceal himself from Ragnar's eye.

Ragnar huffed, a smirk on his face. It looked like his panic was for nothing. Maybe what he'd felt had been a random fluctuation in power, but nonetheless, it appeared that Flame's attack was beginning to take its tole. It was only a matter of time now.

Ragnar's jaw almost dropped as a sudden chill flowed through the air. Against his better judgement, he reopened his eyes, still seeing the fires around him. In the moment of confusion, Ragnar felt a blast of bitter cold strike him in the back. As he stumbled forward, a storm of ice shards began firing at him from all directions, scraping against his scales and leaving cuts along his sides. Thinking quickly, Ragnar fell to the ground, casting a compact shield around him.

Ember watched with her mouth open before glancing over to Classic, her jaw moving soundlessly as she struggled to find her voice.

"Flame knows how to use ice!?" she exclaimed, finally managing to ask the obvious question.

"Hey, don't look at me," Classic said, looking over with a flat glance. "You're his sister. I would have thought you'd be explaining to me right now how that happened."

"Yeah, but…!" Ember let out a groan, placing a paw on her head as she closed her eyes. "I'm so confused right now…"

"Tell me about it," Classic said, glancing back towards the battle. "What I want to know is how he convinced the fairies to give him a second element. They normally don't unless it's a special case, like trying to stop some egomaniac from taking over the realms."

Classic smirked, glancing over to Ember. "On the plus side, as much of a mind-breaker Flame is being right now, it shows that the fairies can be convinced to give dragons other elements, which means you can probably gain them too if you want." He glanced over to Legend and Cynder, who were sitting at his other side. "Cyn probably can too; that is, if she doesn't mind taking away Ro's 'special unique dragon scale-colour' trait."

Getting nothing but silence in return, Classic blinked, tilting his head as he saw the two staring intently at the battle going on. "Uh… guys?"

Legend couldn't take his eyes off the battlefield, watching as the shards continued to pelt Ragnar's shield. Before long, Flame stopped, his paws delicately touching the ground before he pulled a back-flip, kicking up a stream of ice towards Ragnar. Landing on the ground again, Flame struck hard with his front paws, shattering the stream right down the middle as he charged, collecting the ice shards behind him and reforming them into four floating swords of ice, their edges growing shaper with each shard collected. The wave hit the barrier and caused Ragnar to stagger, his chi barrier fluctuating, and Flame smirked.

With a flick of the wing, one of the ice swords shot forward, piercing the barrier and nearly impaling Ragnar's shoulder. It stopped just

short and Ragnar quickly spun around, grabbing the ice sword in his paw.

" *NO!"*

Both Legend and Cyril's voices rang out as Ragnar crushed the ice without a second thought…only to be met with a grinning Flame. Before Ragnar could process his odd, sudden burst of confidence, the shards Ragnar had broken apart froze in mid air before shooting right back into his paw, piercing his scales without mercy. Ragnar roared in pain, stumbling on his back paws and dropping his staff, firing a blast of chi with his free paw. Flame quickly jumped back as the blast kicked up a mound of dust throughout the arena, forcing the onlookers to cover their eyes and mouths.

As the dust began to clear, Ragnar panted, grasping his now-bleeding paw as he eyed the smug-looking Flame with a scowl.

"Hey, now, don't you get uppity with me," Flame said, a smirk on his face. "If the other guardians were willing to use their furies and trap Ember in an ice bubble, then a little technique like this should be fair play."

Legend narrowed his eyes. That tore it. He knew something was up. The stances, the sudden use of ice, and that technique he had just used… That was an advanced ice-dragon technique, even for his own baseline. Not even he had figured out how to properly master it yet. Even if Flame was a looper, there was no way he could have known how to perform that!

"That's not Flame."

All the loopers turned their heads, looking over to Ember, who had a stern look on her face. Stepping forward, she scowled.

"That is not my brother out there!" she said, digging her claws into the ground.

Flame paused, glancing over with a blank look on his face. From behind his puppet's curtain, Malefor blinked, watching as Ember slowly took steps forward with the intent to pounce. It didn't take much to realize who she was referring to. Malefor scowled. These two were siblings? Why didn't anyone say anything earlier? Was he simply not paying close enough attention? Malefor shook his head. He needed to think fast.

"What? What do you mean, Ember?" Flame asked, reeling back as he raised a paw to his chest, eyes wide. "How can you even say that!? Of course it's me!"

"No, you're not!" Ember said, giving a growl. "The Flame I know would never seriously hurt someone like that! Especially in what's supposed to be a sparring match!"

"Ember, didn't you chop off Cyril's claw in the last match? And didn't he, you know, trap you in an ice bubble?" Flame said, narrowing his eyes.

"Yeah, but that was an *accident!* I didn't use my barrier spells after that!" Ember said, taking another step forward. "And what Cyril did doesn't matter! I know my Flame! He would never resort to that, even if it was allowed!"

"I just want to make sure I'm there to protect you, is all!" Flame said, an annoyed look on his face. "Can't a big brother look out for his sister?"

Ember smirked, standing up straight as she kept her eyes on Flame. "Oh, so you're my *big* brother now?"

"Yeah! And just because you started looping earlier doesn't change that!" Flame said, huffing as he dug his claws into the ground.

"Really? Then tell me, *Flame* ," Ember said, narrowing her eyes, "how does that work when I'm a year older than you are in *baseline* ?"

Flame recoiled, scowling as he grasped one of his forelegs. Quickly shaking it off, he gave a nervous chuckle and scratched the back of his head, a nervous grin on his face. "Yeah, well, I was just…just checking to make sure you were who you say you are, too, big sis!"

"Really?" Ember said, a smirk on her face. "Then why did you cave the second I fed you a complete and total *lie* ?"

Flame flinched, a scowl on his face for a fraction of a second before he quickly put on an awkward smile. "Yeah, w-well... I'm just messing with your head, l-little sis! That's what big brothers are for!"

"Really, *little bro?* " Ember said, an apathetic look on her face. "I would think, if you were messing with my head, then you'd be more confident about it. Of course, you'd know if you're my big brother or little brother if you truly are a looping Flame, right?"

"Wait…" Classic said, scratching his head as he glanced over to Legend Sparx. "I'm confused. Is she his big or little sister?"

"Beats the heck out of me," Legend Sparx muttered, crossing his arms as he glanced towards the field. "This is like that one loop Ro and I were in, where that kid pulled that 'hot or cold coffee' gambit on that blond-haired girl…"

Ember took a step forward, slamming her paw on the ground as she scowled. "So which is it!? Am I your big or little sister!?"

Flame stuttered, his mouth open but words refusing to come out. Scales beginning to itch from the stress, Flame scowled and grabbed his foreleg as his scales started to become redder than usual.

"I'm… I'm…" he muttered, taking a deep breath between pauses.

"For that matter," Legend spoke up, walking forward and standing next to Ember, "how did you learn to use ice? Let alone pull off the

more advanced techniques of it, considering they're from my baseline and you're from Spy's."

"I, uh…" Flame paused, giving a shrug with an awkward grin on his face. "Don't know?" He shook his head, looking at Legend with an awkward glance. "I don't know how I did it, I just knew I could."

"If it were for any other element, I might have considered your excuse," Legend said, giving Flame a stern look. "Ice is an element that draws its power from logic and thinking things through. This means that an ice dragon knows exactly what they can do to their opponents and exactly how easy it would be." He took a step forward. "If you really 'didn't know,' then there's no way you could have used ice in the first place, let alone the advanced techniques you just displayed."

Flame flinched, freezing in place before he finally took a deep breath and lowered his head down.

"Well, I didn't want to say anything, but… I did loop into your world before," Flame said, looking up with a frown. "I looped in as an ice dragon, and ended up retaining the ability to use it. The reason I didn't say anything was because I thought it was just a variant of my baseline, and you didn't seem to be awake, so..."

"Impossible!" Legend spat, narrowing his eyes. "Even if you looped in as an ice dragon and managed to retain that in the loops, I have a way to prove if you did or didn't, even if I wasn't in that loop at the time."

"What? How!?" Flame said, his scales beginning to become irritated from the stress.

"The Chronicler's books."

"The what?" Flame asked, rearing back slightly as he looked on with a blank expression.

"Each dragon in my baseline has a special book created when they are born that chronicles their lives," Legend said, stepping forward as he kept a stern eye on Flame. "They are soul-bound to each dragon, which means, when one starts looping, it starts looping with them. Naturally, after a while, it becomes hard not to notice them when they start taking up whole shelves on their own. And even if you didn't loop back in, it should still be chronicling your exploits in the loops, regardless."

"That is, of course," Legend said, stopping just short of Flame with a stern look on his face, "unless you took the book with you in your subspace. If that's the case, then just pull the book out right now and we'll drop this argument."

Flame let out a small, choking sound, beginning to scratch away at one of his forelegs as he glanced between the stern expressions of both Legend and Ember. Malefor snarled, baring his fangs behind the curtain. How could these whelps have stymied him so easily? He watched as Flame gave a nervous chuckle, slowly beginning to back away.

"Do we even need him to do that at this point?" Classic called from the sidelines, looking on with a raised eye-ridge. "I think it's obvious from the way he was acting that something is up."

Malefor growled. What he could he do? He could try creating a fake book for Flame, but he knew absolutely nothing about this whelp's life beyond this 'loop,' as they would put it. If they even so much as took a glance at it, there was a high chance they'd be able to tell it was fake. Giving a few seconds' pause, his growls being the only thing to pierce the silence, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes, an action that Flame quickly mirrored.

"...Fine."

Both Legend and Ember blinked, watching as Flame reopened his eyes with an emotionless expression on his face.

"I suppose there's no point in me keeping up this charade any longer now," Flame said, looking on with a scowl. "Is there?"

Legend quickly got into defensive stance and, while she jolted at the sudden shift in personality, Ember was quick to join him. Flame looked on with an indifferent expression, embers beginning to dance around his scales.

"I was hoping to avoid putting this whelp in harm's way, considering how he helped me adjust early on, but things don't always go according to plan," Flame said, his voice taking a sudden, gravelly tone.

"Let me guess," Legend said, digging his claws into the ground. "Malefor, right?"

"Very perceptive," Flame said, giving a huff. "You loopers are quick-witted."

"Or we can put two and two together," Classic said, quickly running up next to Legend and Ember with a smirk. "I mean, super-powered genocidal big bad attacking the realms, Flame being possessed and given superpowers…" He smirked, lowering to the ground. "Not particularly hard to connect the dots, to be honest."

"Perhaps," Flame said, giving the slightest of smirks. "Regardless, it's no matter. I was expecting to finish you off in person, but having a bargaining chip in the battle should make up for the lower power this whelp can withhold."

Malefor gave a demented grin from behind Flame's veil. "From what I understand, this whelp is important to a few of you outside of this current 'loop,' correct?"

Flame glanced over to Ember, a sadistic grin on his face. "I know the whelp over there just made a big deal over the fact that he's normally her brother. I wonder if you'd be willing to kill him with your own claws."

Ember gasped, her eyes going wide as she reeled back. Classic looked over to her with his mouth slightly agape before looking back at Flame with a smirk.

"Nice try, idiot, but need I remind you that we're stuck in a time-warp?" Classic asked, giving a cocky grin. "Even if Flame gets seriously injured, when the loop resets, he'll be just fine the next loop, absolutely no worse for wear."

"True," Flame said, looking over to Classic with the sadistic grin still on his face. "But do you really want that on your conscience? Murdering one of your friends just for the sake of making one loop peaceful, when all this will eventually amount to nothing?"

"Doesn't matter to me."

All the loopers present, sans Cynder, jolted as Legend took a few steps forward with a stern expression on his face. While this was going on, Ragnar lowered his remaining good paw to the ground, a light blue aura starting to grow around it.

"While the others may have some connection to Flame, I do not," Legend said, narrowing his eyes. "For all I care, he's just another enemy standing in our way, and one more body won't even make a noticeable difference to the blood on my talons."

Classic's jaw dropped as Ember stared on with an absolutely horrified expression. Her eyes darted from Legend to Cynder, who looked back with a stoic expression, managing to give the faintest of nods. Ember glanced back at Classic, who had hunkered down, just about to jump between the two. Just before he could, though, there was a rush of wind through the hall.

Flame barely had time to glance to his side and duck under a blast of chi. Before he could move, his paws were encased in earth as the ground suddenly raised up, Legend holding a steady stance. Thinking fast, Malefor encased Flame's body in shadows, melting into the ground and beginning to flow away.

Cynder scowled, immediately getting to her paws. She was about ready to jump into the ground after him, but was stopped when a blinding flash of light filled the building.

Flame stumbled out of his shadowy form, attempting to regain his footing, stumbling as dots of light obscured his vision. He barely had enough coordination to dodge out of the way of a bolt of lightning, courtesy of Volteer. As he got to his paws once again, he opened his mouth, a purple light beginning to grow in his throat. A light that dissipated when something hard smacked him in the back of the head. Flame's expression went blank, his vision blurred and, with a groan, he hit the ground with a thud.

Malefor's jaw hung agape as he felt his control over Flame weaken. The whelp had been knocked out cold. With a scowl, Malefor let out a low growl and reeled his head back with a mighty roar.

Back at the dojo, Terrador stood over Flame's unconscious body with a frown on his face, his tail encased in stone. Ember and Classic quickly rushed over to his side, looking down at the body with looks of horror on their faces.

"He'll be fine," Terrador said, glancing downward. "I only hit him hard enough that he'll be out for a while." Glancing over towards his fellow guardians, Terrador gave a stern look. "In the meantime, we need to make sure he's restrained in case this Malefor still has control over him. We shouldn't waste a moment."

With agreeing nods, his fellow guardians approached. Terrador lent down, gently grabbing Flame's tail in his maw and lifting his limp body, heading away with his fellow guardians close by in case Flame woke up. Legend held a stern expression, beginning to follow.

Behind the escort, Classic held a scowl. Without wasting a second, he darted after Legend. Ember glanced towards Cynder, who held a frown. With a shared nod, the two dragonesses followed Classic.

Malefor felt a vein beginning to protrude from his temple. How easily they had dealt with his proxy was one thing, but that purple whelp… The waterian blood and genes still held firm. To so coldly declare he had no problems killing one of his own kind… It was despicable. Malefor was the only true dragon left in these realms and there was absolutely no denying it now.

He sighed, closing his eyes as a twinge of regret washed over him. He wished he hadn't gotten Flame involved in this. From what he had seen in the time the whelp had helped him adjust to this world, he was the only one who he could consider a true casualty. The waterian genes hadn't taken him, like they had taken the others of this ancestors-forsaken world.

Malefor felt fatigue set in as his head began to hang low. He didn't want to rest. Ancestors knew the last thing he wanted was to be lost in his own mind, but he couldn't fight it any longer, not after everything that had just happened. If he wanted any hope of beating these loopers, then he would need to be as well-rested as his own warped psyche would allow. With a sigh, he turned around as the stiff, doll-like body of Ripto entered the room. Malefor glanced over with a stoic expression before he headed out of the room.

"What the hell was that about, *Legend* ?" Classic snapped, catching up to the other purple dragon.

"There are two things you need to realize about what happened back there, Spy," Legend replied calmly. "First, for most of my 'adventures,' " he began with a snort at the last word, "I don't fight golems or creatures made with magic. I fight apes. They're alive, they're real, and their putrid guts stink when I splay them out on the ground. And in Dante's Freezer, they actually steam in the bitter wind and snow."

Legend paused to allow Classic to get that lovely image locked into his brain.

Continuing, Legend said, "Next, you have to realize that Malefor was playing you back there. Maybe this isn't the same Malefor that I fight every single loop, but that game is exactly to his style. Once he revealed his control over Flame, he had how many opponents to face down? Ten? He wanted you to hesitate, and the longer you stalled, the better his position. And did you notice what happened when I called him out? He tried to get Flame out of there. He tried to run. For whatever reason, Malefor didn't...doesn't want Flame to die."

"But why did you have to say that?"

"I said it because I needed to. I said it because it was true. And I could say it because I'm no hero, Spy."

With that, Legend continued down the hall, a stoic expression on his face. Classic blinked before an annoyed scowl appeared on his face. Cynder shortly passed by him, Ember following in tow. The latter stopped shortly in front of Classic, glancing back with a concerned expression.

"Spyro?" she asked, raising an eye-ridge.

"Oh, nothing…" Classic said, giving a sigh as he lowered his head. "Was just talking to Legend about what he said earlier." He raised his head back up, glancing at Ember with a frown. "I swear, it's one step forward with him, then two steps back."

"Why? He wasn't going to really consider…" Ember paused, giving a gulp as her complexion slowly lost some color.

Classic huffed, shaking his head. "I don't know. I'd like to say I doubt it, but…"

He let out an annoyed sigh, glancing up as he began to continue down the hall. Ember gave a concerned frown, slowly beginning to follow along.

The two eventually came to the infirmary, rounding the doorway and coming to a stop just short of entering. Inside, an unconscious dragon lay on the bed, his soft breaths being the only thing that signaled he was still alive. By his side, Terrador and Red stood, glancing down as Red gave an annoyed grunt, placing a claw to his chin.

"I just don't know, Terrador…" Red muttered, narrowing his eyes. "I just can't sense any link that would allow one to control this dragon. Either this 'Malefor' is an exceptionally experienced magic-user to mask his signs like that, or he's using something entirely different to control this whelp."

Terrador huffed, glancing down at Flame and the mechanical-looking collar around his neck. Small crystals jutted out the front of the collar, magic sparking between them.

"In any case, we need to be careful around him for the time being," Terrador said, shaking his head. "I hate using these collars, but such a thing is required from time to time."

"Bah. If a dragon is that dangerous, they deserve to have their elements suppressed," Red said, a stern expression on his face that slowly began to soften as he glanced down at Flame. "...Though, admittedly, I do feel bad for this whelp getting caught in the crossfire."

Classic frowned, slowly making his way into the room. Ember was far quicker about it, darting to Flame's bedside. A worried frown on her face, she glanced up at the two guardians.

"Is Flame going to be alright?" she asked, quickly glancing back towards him.

"Rest assured," Terrador said, looking down with a reassuring smile. "He'll make a full recovery."

"There's still the matter of Malefor, though," Red said, scratching his chin. "We have no idea whether or not he'll still be in control once he wakes up. I can't sense any links that would give him control, but, somehow, that only worries me more than it should reassure…"

Terrador shot Red a stern glance at how his words had only caused Ember's worried eyes to widen, which Red was all too willing to return in accord. He huffed, crossing his forelegs.

"Bah," Red spat, glancing away. "Candy-coating the truth isn't going to help anyone, Terrador." He glanced down at the two younglings before looking back at Terrador. "Besides, from what I understand, these 'whelps' are older than we are."

Terrador held his stoic expression, glancing down at Ember and Classic before looking back up at Red. "Be that as it may, we can't say anything for sure yet. It's best not to cause anymore unneeded stress, especially in these times."

Red scowled, glancing away with his arms crossed. Terrador sighed, placing a paw over his eyes.

' *Ignitus… Why did you have to leave me with such stubborn guardians?'* he thought, shaking his head.

Classic looked between the two with amusement. If nothing else, Red was going to make having to spend some time with the elders in this loop more bearable. Glancing over to the bed, he watched as Ember kept her eyes firmly on Flame, the sight causing the amused expression on Classic's face to fade. With a concerned frown, he walked over to the opposite side of the bed, watching as Flame's body rose and fell with soft breaths.

Red watched the scene with a stoic expression on his face. Turning to Terrador, he gave a breathless sigh.

"Terrador," Red said, glancing towards the door. "Maybe we should check the parameter in case Malefor is attempting a sneak attack?"

"That shouldn't be necessary," Terrador said, shaking his head. "Cyril and Volteer are keeping watch."

"Both of them?" Red asked, an amused expression on his face. "*Together* ?"

Terrador blinked, looking at Red with a confused expression. Before long though, Terrador's eyes went wide, a horrified look on his face.

"...Good point," he said, giving a sigh as he lowered his head. Taking a deep breath, he began to head towards the door, muttering something about how they'd give out guardian positions to anyone these days.

Red held an amused smirk on his face before glancing down at the young dragons and giving a nod. With that, he headed out of the room. Classic looked after him, grinning slightly, before glancing back towards Flame with a concerned expression. Ember let out a low moan, closing her eyes.

"How did things get to this point…?" she muttered, shaking her head. "It seems like only yesterday we were just walking around the city and helping the others relax…"

Classic glanced at Ember with a concerned glint in his eyes. Raising a paw, he tilted his head.

"You know, Ember, if this is too much, you don't have to come with us tomorrow…" he said, glancing over to Flame as he placed his paws back on the bed. "I know this is all insane, even by my standards, too…"

"No! I want to help!" Ember said, a determined expression on her face. "It's just…"

She sighed, lowering her head and closing her eyes. Shaking her head, she looked back over to Flame, her eyelids barely able to open at the sight of him.

"To think… That could have been any of us," Ember said, a frown on her face. "I can't imagine what it must be like to not have control of your body, someone else pulling the strings. I know Cynder had to go through that, but…to see it happen to my brother first-paw…" She paused, staring intently at Flame, still as a statue. Then, with a huff, she looked over to Classic with a determined expression. "Isn't there anything we can do?"

Classic looked at Flame, placing a claw to his chin as he raised an eye-ridge. "Hmmm…"

He tapped the base of his chin, glancing over to Ember not long after with a smirk. "I think I have an idea."

"What's that?" Ember asked, quickly tensing up and ready to jump at the chance to help.

"Well, it's a long shot, but…" Classic stood up with confidence, placing a paw on Flame's head. "Maybe there's something in Flame's dreams that might help. They say it's the gateway to one's inner soul or…something crazy like that."

"Do you really think so?" Ember asked, raising an eye-ridge. "I mean, I don't really see…"

"Hey, it's worth a shot," Classic said, giving a prideful grin. "I managed to help Ro deal with his super-powered evil side like this. Might be able to get Flame to subconsciously break his connection with Mally this way."

Ember looked on with an apprehensive expression, unsure if she found Classic's plan more or less ridiculous than his current nickname for Malefor. A moan knocked her out of her train of thought, as Flame shuffled slightly in his sleep. Ember's expression softened at the sight, before she gave Classic a nod.

"Alright," she said, quickly getting up with a determined expression. "I'm coming too!"

"I'm not sure if I can do that, though," Classic said, tilting his head. "Not unless you know how to dream-walk, too. Otherwise, I don't think I can take anyone with me."

Ember bit her lower lip. "Isn't there anything I can do, though?"

"If you want, you can act as lookout to make sure Ro doesn't walk in," Classic said, looking over to the doorway. "He shouldn't be too opposed to the idea, what with how I helped him out this way before, but with how he's been acting lately…"

Ember gave a nod, quickly moving towards the doorway. Stopping halfway there, she glanced back with a blank expression. "And the guardians?"

"Probably best they don't know either," Classic said, an annoyed expression on his face. "Even if we proved ourselves, you know how elders can be…"

Once again, Ember gave a nod. As she stepped out, Classic took a deep breath, closed his eyes and lay down next to the bed, resting his head as he let his magical energy surround him. With a soft sigh, he let the soft blanket of sleep engulf him, as ethereal purple magic slipped out of his body and was absorbed into Flame's forehead…

(A/N: Not much to say about this chapter, really. At the very least, the sparring is over, so there should be no more delays to the main plot. Looks like Classic is in for another dream-traveling expedition. Hopefully, it won't end with him being trapped in a rock egg again. I'm sure Flame's psyche is far more stable than Legend's, though. After all, it's not like you can actually dream-hop through another's dream…right?

Remember to leave a review because it really helps us out, and if you're interested in submitting your own snip to the compilation, check out the FF.N Forum. I would also say check

out the Spacebattle thread, but FF.N had the brilliant idea to disable outside links.

Have a nice day!)

Two freak-outs for the price of one

(Chapter beta-read by Riverstyxx)

(Classic Loop 38.1)

A roaring fireball sailed through the air to land on the makeshift scarecrow test dummy, which burst into flames and sent hay flying everywhere.

Ember huffed, charging the next test dummy that was still standing, chi claws extended as she pounced. Slamming the claws in as far as they would go, she used the momentum to jump back and began to hack away wildly at the scarecrow as fast as she could. She let out a burst of flames, then flapped her wings once she'd broken off the attack, and landed a good distance away as the scarecrow fell to flaming pieces.

"Good," said a voice from behind her. "Now all you need is an enemy that will stay perfectly still while you flail around like a nutjob."

Ember flinched and glanced back to see Ragnar step forth with an indifferent expression.

"You're still falling back on your instincts too much. Chi is not about wild strikes and overpowering the opponent. It is like a flowing river, following a set path and keeping a cool aura," he said, resting his staff on his shoulder. "Until you understand that, you will never be able to use it effectively."

Ember frowned, but nonetheless stood firm, bowing her head respectively. "Yes, Sensei."

Ragnar smirked, gently moving his staff down and placing it under Ember's chin, raising her head back up to look at him.

"Now, now. Chin up. At least you're willing to admit your faults and try to improve past them." Ragnar paused, glancing back with a scowl. "...Unlike a certain *other* pupil of mine."

As if on cue, the air became thick as a low roar rang out. A bright blue glow began to shine throughout the area as Spyro stood on his hind legs, shouting at the top of his lungs, paws at his sides as a flashy aura of chi illuminated around him like a fireball. From the sidelines, Hunter and Sparx watched on with sunglasses over their eyes. After several seconds of his apparent fit, Spyro finally broke it off and fell onto all fours, panting heavily.

Sparx and Hunter proceeded to hold up signs with a nine and an eight on them. Spyro grinned.

"Hero of the realms, he is…" Ragnar muttered, letting out a solemn sigh and resting his head in the palm of his paw.

Ember giggled as Ragnar cursed something under his breath.

(Legend Loop 38.2)

Spyro sighed. Ignitus being his biological father was a loop variant that wasn't anything new. Honestly, it wouldn't have surprised him if such was the case in baseline, even though Ignitus himself frequently made it clear that he was far too old at the point to properly raise a youngling of his own. Still, it would have explained a lot about him, including the close, almost father-son relationship they shared.

But what this loop variant was trying to tell him was completely lost on him.

"Now then, Spyro, while you should be proud that the power of a purple dragon courses through your veins, you should be even prouder of your ice dragon heritage."

Spyro did his best to keep a straight face. The odd regal jacket designed for a dragon, which fit tightly around him, was only slightly less uncomfortable than the puffy shirt worn underneath it. He let out a breathless sigh, looking up at Cyril with a painful smile.

"Uh, D-Dad…" He cleared his throat, glancing down at his ridiculous getup. "Is this really…really necessary?"

"Of course! I'll have you know, this suit was passed down by our ancestors from generation to generation!" Cyril said, raising a claw with a proud look on his face.

"It's just… Dragons don't normally wear cloths, and since the temple could be attacked at any moment…"

"Now, now, son. Just because we're in the middle of a war doesn't mean we can't indulge in our own culture," Cyril said, placing his paw on his chest. "We ice dragons are far more refined and dignified than the other dragon races. These clothes help us exemplify that to those around us, and help keep our dignified air alive."

Spyro hunched over, a half scowl on his face. If that were really true, then why exactly could he hear the soft laughs of a dragoness and a dragonfly in the nearby hallway?

(Classic Loop 38.3)

Cleetus looked on with his head cocked, jaw hung limp and pupils shrunk. Things could get weird in the Beast Maker Realm, in no small part thanks to everyone being able to conjure up any creature imaginable. This was no less true with new Beast Makers, whose imaginations often went wild at the very thought. It wasn't usually too bad, though; nothing they couldn't handle.

However, they had never before handled anything like a four-headed, fire-breathing purple slug the size of their largest temple.

Spyro buzzed around the creature's head, firing bolts of magic that bounced off its skin and left nary a mark. The creature roared, and one of its heads smacked into Spyro. The impact caused a puff of smoke and the purple dragon was thrown halfway across the village, his crash-landing broken by a straw hut.

Spyro groaned. He pulled himself out of the wreckage…now adorned in a clown suit, a bushy mustache, and a blonde wig. Someone chuckled nearby and he shot the perpetrator a sharp glare, his teeth bared and a low growl coming from his throat.

"I must say, I never expected someone new to this to create something like this on their first try," Ember said, a smirk on her face.

"Oh, laugh it up, bunny princess!" Spyro said, his eyes narrowed while a puff of smoke escaped his nostrils. "For all your 'grand' Beast Maker experience, I don't see you trying to help!"

"What? You want me to summon Bunnyzilla to fight this thing?" Ember stuck her tongue out and giggled shortly after. She crossed her forelegs, a grin on her face, occasionally chuckling. "Besides, I'm not the one who caused this problem."

Spyro groaned and scowled as he glanced to the side. He narrowed his eyes and crossed his forelegs as he shook the wig off his head. "Neither am I, but you don't see me waiting on the sidelines!"

As soon as that was said, Spyro caught sight of a blur headed his way. His jaw dropped and his eyes went wide. He stumbled out of the way as straw kicked up where the blur smashed into the ground. There was a low groan before Cynder poked her head out of the mess. She was wearing a dress, and there was a bright yellow-and-pink polka-dot party hat on her head. She shook her head as Spyro stepped forth, a scowl on his face.

"Yo! Next time you'd like to learn some powers from our universe, mind giving us the heads up?"

Cynder paused. She touched her index claws together and blushed, a small, sheepish grin on her face.

(Fused Loop 38.4) (Feat: Masterweaver)

"...Uh, Cynder?"

"Yeah, Ember?"

"I just... There's something I've been meaning to ask."

"Yes?"

"...Okay, so you and your Spyro... You call each other mates, right?"

"Yes. Not in the way that weird Doctor human does, but we are mates."

"Which implies that you have...mated."

"...Yes...? It's perfectly natural."

"Um... Just so we're clear... In your baseline, you're both, uh...underage?"

"...OH! Oh, that's right, hahaha. Well, yes and no. There's no actual law about age limits in our loops most of the time—just that both parties have to be consenting and knowledgeable, and that they both have to take responsibility for it."

"But—"

"Ember, Spyro and I are stuck in a world at war, in a constant time loop, with no chance of eggs both because of the admin-invoked limitations and our own anatomy. We are, functionally speaking, adults in children's bodies. What we do in our private time is just that: private. I understand your concerns and I appreciate that you

come from a world where it's taboo, and that's why Spyro and I are limiting ourselves to kissing while we're here."

"...It just weirds me out, is all."

"Well, we've had time to get used to it. And it's a great stress reliever, all things told—"

"Right, I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that and go do...something."

(Legend Loop 38.5) (Feat: Masterweaver)

Variants.

For most loopers, they were generally regarded with amused irritation. 'Oh, something new. Something unexpected. I didn't plan for this, but I'll enjoy it.' Of course, there were the horrible variants where everyone was evil and the world was built of terror, but, on the flipside, there were the amazing variants where cotton candy was handed out for free and the only thing the natives worried about was getting a stomachache. All in all, though, that only made up a small percentage of the unusual bits.

Spyro, for the most part, considered variants to be a blessing. True, there were some he didn't like—harem loops came to mind—but his baseline involved a genocidal war, his love being brainwashed, and, oh, let's not forget the potential end of the world. Granted, it was all becoming easier to handle, but a break was a break...even if it did come with dragonesses fighting for his attention like he was a precious pet or something.

This variant had started out that way. Well, Cynder was awake and, thankfully, not too affected by the harem curse—she was actually somewhat amused by the way the other dragonesses would set up their elaborate plots—and Sparx had, as always, taken picture after picture after picture. Spyro had endured the humiliation, confident in the knowledge that this would pass.

And then something went horribly wrong.

His first and only warning was a screech from the air before he was ploughed through the ground with enough force that, for a moment, he thought Malefor had escaped. He had just geared himself up to fight when suddenly a snout shoved against his lips, a forked tongue aggressively invading his own mouth as he felt sharp claws pinning his wings against the ground. It took him a few seconds to reboot his brain before he realized that his assailant had white scales; with that realization, he quickly kicked the dragoness away and rolled into a standing position.

"Flashwing, what—?!"

"You're going to love me."

It wasn't a growl, but a predatory hiss. Spyro took in the focused expression, the flickering lights in her crystals, the slow methodical swing of her tail. Something had changed.

"Look, Flashwing," he tried, "I'm sorry that I've been distant—"

He dodged as she jumped at him, but apparently she was expecting his move and spun in midair, clutching at him with her diamond-tipped claws and shoving him over. Flashwing's face darted at his again, but he grabbed it and smashed it into the ground, rolling out from under her as she let out a roar of pain. "Will you stop that?! You can't force me to love you!"

The crystal dragon snapped her gaze around, wings flaring wide. "No? No, no no, of course I can't. You've already made your choice," she spat, prowling toward him. "And you know, maybe I'd be okay with you and Cynder. Maybe, maybe if, you know, if you hadn't made that choice so long ago, hmm?"

Spyro cautiously circled around Flashwing, careful to keep her crazed gaze in sight. "I'm sure you can find a good dragon... someday," he suggested. "I mean, you've got the will, certainly—"

"Oh, but it's you I want," Flashwing purred. "And I don't mind sharing—really, I don't. Admit it, Spyro, some basic and carnal part of you wouldn't mind if I joined you and Cynder in the nest; I'll even try to make sure she's alright with it, hmm?"

He frowned. "The answer is no, Flashwing."

"Oh, yes, of course it's 'no.' You get to choose," she growled. "After all, you're Spyro, the legendary, conqueror of armies, slayer of Malefor—oh, and did I mention hero of the world?" She gestured broadly to the land around them. "All this is yours; all this is what you get. You get to exist."

Spyro tilted his head, trying to track her line of thought. "...So? You exist too—"

"NO I DON'T!" Flashwing snarled, stomping on the ground. "You made sure of that, you coward! You abandoned me! YOU ABANDONED US ALL!"

"...What are you talking about?"

"Cynder told me everything," Flashwing growled. "About the tree. About the loops. About the Skylands!"

Spyro's eyes widened as she pointed a claw at him.

"WE COULD HAVE EXISTED! It didn't even have to be you; it could be a new Spyro! Like that other one she talked about—or maybe somebody else, even! We could have existed, all of us! But YOU—you are so damn LOYAL that you can't let your heart out to strangers!"

"That's not why it's read only!" Spyro insisted. "There are other reasons—"

"Oh, yes, because you'll save your own realm so easily but, when it comes to others, obviously they're just GARBAGE!"

As suddenly as Flashwing's anger came, it vanished to be replaced by a seductive smile. "But you know, if I start looping... Maybe, maybe I can get it to work. Maybe I can solve all those little issues from the inside. But for me to start looping, I have to be loved by a looper." She sidled closer to him, manic desire in her eyes. "And you are going to love me, Spyro. I can feel it in my gems, you...are going...to love—"

Cynder descended like a meteor from the sky, knocking the other dragoness out with a single blow. She looked up at Spyro and gasped. "Your wings!"

Spyro glanced to his sides. "Huh?" There were, in fact, small gash marks where Flashwing had pinned him down. "Oh, that...that's nothing, it's fine—"

"Oh ancestors, Spyro, I'm so sorry! I just... She was going on and on about how she was going to steal you from me, and I snapped and went on a rant about the loops and, when I finished, she was just staring at me and I didn't mean to break her—"

"Just..." Spyro held up a claw. "Can we just... I think we need to take her somewhere. And then I...I need to think about this."

(Classic Loop 38.6)

Spyro lay down in the fields of Magic Crafters, a frown on his face as he stretched. He gazed up at the clouds rolling across the blue sky and forced his eyes to stay open, despite a sudden yawn of protest. He sighed, then crossed his forelegs and tilted his head. Sparx flew over with a raised eye-ridge.

"What's up with you?" he asked as he landed atop Spyro's forehead, a smirk on his face. "Shouldn't you be causing some poor elder to take out more life insurance by now?"

"I don't know, Sparx…" Spyro said, his gaze cast upward. "Something doesn't feel right."

"What do you mean?"

Spyro looked back up at the sky, his forelegs moved behind his head.

"Like...the previous loop was something serious, and anything silly you attempt the loop right after would just feel horribly out of place. Ever get that feeling?"

(Legend Loop 38.7)

The two moons merged in the sky and a purple beam of Convexity shot down into the Well of Souls. The Mountain of Malefor chipped away as the ground shook, collapsing in on itself as the sky took on an ominous purple hue. Then the light exploded, and boulders rose up into the air as a form materialized where the fortress had once stood. With a roar that echoed out across the lands, Malefor flew forth, his sharp teeth bared.

"I am freed!" he rumbled, dark tendrils sparking along his claws. "At last! Now, it is time for the prophecy to be fulfilled!"

"Mind if I have a say in that?"

Malefor spun around, his eyes narrowed and purple vapors of Convexity flaring out of his nostrils. Floating in the sky was a humanoid figure adorned in an orange karate gi, with black hair that spiked out in front and behind his head. The figure stared Malefor down, eyes narrowed and body tense. Malefor huffed and his scowl turned into a smirk.

"And who might you be, so foolish as to stand in front of me?" he asked, elemental sparks arcing all over his body.

The figure smirked. "A friend of a friend who you've been causing hell for over the past several thousands of years."

Malefor scoffed, fangs bared. "Nonsense. I've barely known anyone for a few years at most, and the only ones who incur my wrath are those who stand in the way of the purple dragon's destiny."

"You'd be surprised," the figure said, stance unfazed and expression unwavering. "You don't remember him, but he's had to deal with you plenty of times. More than anyone should have to, if we're being honest." He huffed. "I'll give you a hint. It's the only other purple dragon alive right now."

Malefor growled, but a second breath killed it as the muscles in his forelegs loosened. He grinned, his eyes still narrowed.

"Ah, yes… Spyro," he said, holding a forepaw up to his chin. "Such a naive whelp, attempting to fight alongside those who stand in our way. It would be so much easier if he accepted his destiny."

"It's only natural for beings who dislike their supposed destiny to rebel against it, and I can't say I blame him," the figure said, a frown on his face. "Destiny is more so a warning of things to come if no actions are taken, really."

Malefor smirked, eyes wide as his body jerked. His head snapped back and he let out a bellowing fit of laughter. The figure didn't flinch, even as Malefor glared at him once again, his sharp teeth showing in a fiendish grin.

"And who are you to make such a ridiculous proclamation!?"

"Someone who has smashed quite a few supposed 'destinies' in his time," the figure said, his lips curling into a smirk. "I've even subbed for a few 'chosen ones' who desperately needed a sick day, and, let me tell you, from what I've heard, there's no one who needs one more than Spyro."

"Bah," Malefor scoffed, his head raised as the grin never left his face. "Even if Spyro were to defeat me, it is still the purple dragon's fate to destroy and recreate the world." His head snapped down, his eyes narrowed. "Are you saying you'd be just as willing to stand up to him once that occurs?"

"Funny you should ask that. Spyro specifically requested that, should it happen." The figure crossed his arms, his head cocked. "Of course, I think he's just worried about nothing. Spyro doesn't strike me as the 'omnicidal maniac' type."

"It does not matter how he is now…" Malefor said, his eyes narrowed. "You'd be surprised at how easily dragons can change. One little snap, one thing the others won't understand, that only you can see…"

"People can also change for the better, see the error of their ways."

Malefor huffed, teeth bared as his claws danced with darkness. "I certainly hope you aren't referring to myself."

"And why not?" the figure asked, his head cocked.

"Because I've already accepted this reality. I've gone too far to just change at the drop of a hat!" Malefor roared, his eyes aglow as his jaw opened wide.

"You'd be surprised," the figure said with a smirk. "I've fought plenty of foes who thought they had gone too far to turn back, and now they are some of my closest allies.

"Really now?" Malefor gave a devilish grin, the moonlight reflecting off his eyes as the air become almost as icy-cold as his words. "And how can you be so sure that it's not a ploy? That they don't intend to stab you in the back as soon as the chance presents itself?"

"Because it'd be pointless to do so, considering the situation we find ourselves in." The figure's face became as solid as stone; his eyes

glared daggers and his muscles became as hard as iron. "And even then, the opportunity has presented itself many times before, yet they never took it. They found peace, and threw away such ridiculous notions as you hold."

"Ridiculous!?" Malefor scoffed, a haze visible around his mouth as he threw his paw to the side. "Is not the nature of every living being to strive for a better outcome!? A better world!? It is the purple dragon's destiny to create a new world when the old one has proven itself to be unsatisfactory! To create a new, more perfect world in its place, without the old's ignorance or problems!" Purple tendrils danced around his body as the light around him faded and he became coated in shadows. "Are you saying you dare to protect an imperfect world?"

"I'm not going to sugarcoat it. The world isn't perfect." The figure scowled, his arms raised in front of him as his muscles tensed in preparation. "But that doesn't mean there isn't good alongside the bad! It's in the nature of beings to strive for a better future, but it's also in their nature to protect their own wellbeing! This world can reach a better tomorrow without need for its destruction! Just as there are bad people, there are as many good—and they are fearing for their lives because one dragon, who believes himself above morals because of his scales, is calling out for their destruction!"

The air grew heavy as the space around the figure began to warp, and a faint glow illuminated from him as the ground shook. Malefor's teeth were bared, his eyes wide at the sight. His body remained as solid as stone, his eyes locked on the figure. Fire danced along his scales, the air was icy-cold, and sparks shot back-and-forth around him. Below him, green vapors flowed up from the fallen fortress. They enveloped Malefor, and his muscles bulged from the touch.

"For the sake of all beings, I refuse to let you deal out your warped sense of justice!" the figure said, his aura flaring brilliantly like the light of the sun. "I will show you that your so-called destiny is nothing but a warped delusion!"

"If this is your stance, then you will die like the rest of the scum in this world!" Malefor roared, and his wings pumped like jet engines as he shot towards the figure. His claws dripped with darkness and purple light grew in his throat with each second that passed.

The figure let out a mighty battle-cry as he charged forward, fists at the ready as energy danced around them.

Malefor gasped, eyes wide as he slammed into the ground. This power… This power that the figure held. Who the hell was this being!? Malefor shook his head, his eyes narrowed as he charged back into the air. No. He couldn't panic. He'd just underestimated this being, that was all. It wouldn't be a mistake he would make twice.

He let out a mighty roar, and Convexity shot out of his maw in an intense purple beam. The figure scowled and seemingly disappeared moments before it hit. Malefor snarled and rolled to the right. A mighty kick flew up and missed his gut by inches as the figure reappeared below where he'd just been. Malefor had been caught off guard by that too many times in this battle already, and he'd be damned if he would let it happen again.

The figure teleported away several feet from where Malefor stood. He smirked, an amused glint in his eyes. "Not bad. I can see why new-to-intermediate loopers would have trouble fighting you."

Malefor growled. The welts and bruises on his scales contrasted with his unmarred opponent. "Don't you dare mock me!"

"It's a compliment, really," the figure said, his arms crossed. "It's a shame you probably won't ever loop. I wouldn't mind fighting you at your full potential."

Malefor let out a roar. How dare this ignorant bastard act like he wasn't anything compared to him! He charged forward, his claws at the ready, before he unleashed a wave of darkness at his enemy. The figure narrowed his eyes as he teleported out of the way.

Malefor felt his side burn as a blast slammed into him. He dropped out of the sky, his wings flailing as he gasped.

The ground was at his back, and a sudden sharp pain shot through his body as the figure's knee dug into him, before he spun and smacked Malefor in the stomach with his foot. There was a deafening ring in his ears, and his body screamed as he felt the earth give way underneath him. Rocks jammed into his scales and droplets of blood stained them a dull crimson. Malefor coughed. He tried to move but felt like he had been chained to the ground; his limbs were heavy and unresponsive.

No… He couldn't die. He couldn't die. Not before completing his prophecy. This wasn't how it was supposed to go; not at all. At the claws of another purple dragon, possibly. They would carry out the prophecy anyway, even if he couldn't. But at the hands of some… some…some hairless ape! How dare they betray him! They had come to him for power before anything else! How dare they toss him aside once they'd discovered some other ancestors-forsaken power source!

"Now do you understand?"

Malefor was knocked out of his train of thought as the figure descended and landed not far from him.

"Do you understand that your so-called fate is nothing but the ravings of a batcrap-crazy dragon?"

No! It wasn't crazy ramblings! It was his destiny! The path laid out for him!

"You still have a choice, you know," the figure said as he extended the palm of his hand. His gaze never left Malefor as he stood his ground. "Give it up. Give up this stupid notion of destroying the planet. The dragons may not be kind to you, but at least they'll realize that you've regained something resembling sanity."

He couldn't let it end here! Not at the hands of some nobody who had nothing to do with the prophecy!

"Maybe, in time, they'll come to trust you—"

"SILENCE!"

Malefor pulled himself back onto his paws, all his efforts focused on using Convexity to heal his wounds. Damn him! Damn him to hell! He wasn't going to lose to him! He wasn't going to let some random abomination of nature stop him now! He'd come too far... Too far to give up!

The figure scowled as he slipped back into a fighting stance, his eyes narrowed. "So, is that really your choice? A shame…"

"I SAID SILENCE, APE!" Malefor roared.

There was only one thing he could attempt, one thing that could possibly give him the edge over this freak of nature. He had never had to use it before, nor was it one of the techniques he had fully mastered, even in his many years of life. It would drain almost every last bit of his power. The very thought set his head ablaze. The thought that an ape, the very creatures that had sworn servitude to him, would push him this far… It was a disgrace to his name, to the very purple dragon line itself.

He did not care, though. He just wanted this fucker to burn. Burn like the rest of the filth in this world!

Malefor began to channel his power: every last bit of Convexity in his body that he could muster. His eyes glowed sharp yellow as a purple aura danced around his form. The figure remained unphased, almost as if to mock his display of power. Malefor growled. The very air around him grew heavy, yet the figure didn't even flinch. If he truly was mocking him, then he would have to tear that defiant expression off his very face!

"I HAVE ONLY JUST BEGUN TO FIGHT!"

Without hesitation, Malefor charged forward as Convexity shot out all around him, warping and twisting the land as it began to melt into a pallet of various shades of purple. The figure's eyes went wide, but he kept his stance strong. He charged forward, fist at the ready, and swung it forward in a swift motion, the blow aimed right between Malefor's eyes. However, the figure's jaw dropped when it seemingly passed right through him as Malefor disappeared in a cloud of smoke.

"Strong as you may be, it takes far more than strength alone to win a fight!"

A purple, hazy cloud surrounded the figure. Malefor could already feel his body starting to burn. This feat of Convexity manipulation was something not even he had fully mastered, and something he doubted any purple dragon could. But he didn't care. It was the last thing he had that could beat, no, *tear* this abomination limb from limb! He wouldn't dare let this bastard stand in his way!

"Let's see if your strength can handle this!"

The figure's eyes shot wide as a purple ethereal cloud began to form in front of him, two glowing eyes at the top and a flash of white just below it. It shot at the figure, who lifted his hands and took a swing, his blow harmlessly phasing through the miasma. It surrounded him, and he began to feel his breath becoming short. He grabbed his throat as the mist started to absorb into him; his skin felt like it was on fire as his face began to go numb.

"I must commend you for lasting this long and forcing me to become this desperate, but it all ends here. Since I'm feeling in a nice mood, I won't kill you outright. No… Your power could be most useful to me, considering my last general was a complete moron."

The figure let out a groan as a dark aura began to wash over him. His skin began to pale as he felt his body become heavy. He

scowled, forcing his eyes open as his blood ran cold.

' *Dammit! Looks like I have no choice!'*

The figure took a deep breath, and all the while he could hear Malefor breathing down his neck.

"Now do you understand? How pointless it is to defy me? You cannot fight fate, and it is the fate of this world to be cleansed!"

The figure scoffed as he managed to force a smirk onto his face. "You act as if you've already won."

"Defiant to the end, are you?" Malefor had to commend this warrior. He may have been foolhardy, but he was strong-willed. He would make a good soldier in his army. "No matter. It is only a matter of time now."

"You should never underestimate your opponents," the figure said. "After all… They may have a trick or two of their own up their sleeve."

If the disembodied dragon could, he would have sneered. He watched the figure force his body into a lowered stance, eyes focused and arms at his sides. Basic movement should have been impossible, and yet, somehow, it didn't surprise him that he could still move. He almost wanted this figure to bust out some hidden technique of his own, if only so he could further explore what powers he could play around with when he became his new general.

Little did the demonic dragon warlord know, one should be careful what one wishes for.

It started with a grunt, which grew into a growl as the figure's muscles tightened. Malefor huffed. He could growl all he wanted, but, in the end, it would not change a thing. However, Malefor soon found his composure fading away as the seconds passed. An aura flared up around the figure as his energy surged. In what had taken

Malefor a matter of decades to reach, the figure had reached in *seconds!*

The figure's growls became a low yet rising yell, his Ancestors-damned power *still* continuing to skyrocket. Malefor's gasp rang out through the void. No! He needed to contain his composure! He mustn't let this rattle him! Nothing could stand up to the purple dragon! Nothing could stand against the prophecy set out for him!

The tendrils began to burn away under the intense power. Malefor cursed under his breath and *forced* the tendrils to reform. He needed to stop this, and *quick!* He gave the briefest focus to the direct area around the figure, and dark gems formed up from the ground like a swarm of angry locusts. Sparks danced between them and the figure, zapping him and syphoning away as much energy as they could, and yet this monster's power continued to grow by the second. At best, the amount of energy they could syphon away was negligible.

Malefor's breaths grew heavy. *Who* was this creature?

The figure began to rise up as his yell echoed throughout the void, the tendrils losing the battle at a cheetah's pace as they were dissolved under the unrelenting power that poured out on top of them.

' *No…'*

The figure's shouts became a mighty roar, and his body snapped upright as his ethereal chains broke away with little resistance.

' *What is this creature…?'*

That thought continued to plague Malefor's mind as bright light flooded the void, and he felt himself, despite his years of power and skill, swatted away like a housefly.

Malefor came to a stop when his back created a rut in the ground that went for several feet. He grunted, his bones creaking with every move as he returned to his paws. He opened his eyes, vision blurred but quick to refocus. In the distance, he saw a faint blue glow and, in a flash, it appeared before him. The figure from before stepped forth, but this time his hair stood on end and contained a teal tint. His aura flared as he stood in place, his gaze fixed on Malefor.

And for all the power this being displayed, all Malefor could sense was…nothing.

His aura flared, and yet Malefor couldn't feel it. Mere moments ago, this being had swatted him away with minimal effort and his power had soared to unimaginable lengths, and yet now… Nothing. Not even a hint of the power he'd just displayed was apparent to him. How was that even possible!? Could this…this…abomination have reached a level of power that was incomprehensible even to him!? No! That was impossible! He was the purple dragon! *Nothing* was beyond his comprehension!

Malefor let out a growl which grew into a roar. He wouldn't let it end here. Not like this. Not at the hands of whatever damned unholy thing the Ancestors had cooked up. He reared his head back, Convexity building in the back of his throat. With every last bit of strength he had left, his body began to glow. He would show this monster what power really was! The power of a purple dragon!

With that, Malefor's head shot forward and the entire surrounding area was dyed in purple light as a beam of Convexity almost as large as the Destroyer itself engulfed the figure. Every last bit of mana, *every fiber of Malefor's being,* was poured into this last-ditch effort. Trees tore away as whatever was left of his fortress disintegrated under his might. His body screamed out to stop. His scales felt like they had been lit on fire, his bones creaked under the massive force, and his throat felt like someone had taken a saw to it.

He didn't care, though. He wouldn't stop. Not until his body gave way or he knew for sure this being was gone for good.

He was unsure how long it lasted. To him, seconds turned to minutes, and minutes grew into an hour. But, before long, Malefor felt his mana run thin and the beam began to waver. It grew smaller by the second, then the ends wobbled and the light began to die down. Finally, Malefor broke the struggle and gasped for breath as a dust cloud kicked up in the wake of his attack.

Everything in his body felt heavy, from bones, to scales, to wings. It was foolhardy to put that much mana into an attack, especially when it was taking what little left-over reserves he had just to keep his life essence from collapsing. It was overkill what he had done. In that moment of panic, he'd overreacted and was now vulnerable to anything that would come his way. His only solace was the fact that the figure was gone for good…

But when the dust cleared, Malefor's blood ran cold.

As the scarred battlefield came back into view, the figure emerged from the dust, unflinching and unscathed. The only signs that his attack had done anything were torn clothes and a minor nick along the figure's cheek. Malefor's jaw hung agape as his eyes went wide. This was… No… This couldn't…

"What…" Malefor muttered, his legs quivering beneath him. "What… are you…?"

The figure's expression remained unchanged as he stopped a foot away from Malefor, his gaze firm and strong. "I already told you. I'm a friend of Spyro."

With that, Malefor felt the bones in his chest give way as he was sent hurtling into the sky. He gasped for air and tears welled up in his eyes.

"Ka… Me…"

This couldn't be how it ended… No! This couldn't be! Not at the hands of something even he couldn't have seen coming!

"Ha… Me…"

He was the purple dragon! It was his fate! His destiny! The only other thing that could possibly oppose him was another purple dragon! He was power. He was fate. He was…

"I… I am…"

"HAAAAAAAA!"

A bright blue light shot towards him as Malefor held a paw to the sky.

"I AM ETERNAL!"

And that was the final phrase out of his mouth, as his body gave way to the massive energy that engulfed him.

Spyro looked on at the rebuilding of Warfang city with a smile. It was rare that he got there as a child, and even rarer that he experienced it during a time of peace. Cynder sat by his side with a similar expression. Not only did she get to see all of this, but it was also during a loop where the Terror of the Skies had never come to pass. She sighed and rested her head on Spyro's shoulder with a content smile.

"Thank you again," Spyro said as he glanced to his side. "I don't like putting my problems on others, but…getting to see this world during a time of peace is something we both really needed."

Goku grinned as he waved his hand, the other pressed against the back of his head. "No problem! Always willing to help, especially when I get to fight someone new!"

"What I don't get, Mister One-Step-Away-From-Adminhood," Sparx chimed in, his arms crossed as he raised an eyebrow, "is why you didn't dye your hair and perform your lightshow sooner. It was fun

seeing Mally have a mental breakdown and all, but why even give him hope that he had a chance?"

"I wanted to see the full range of his power, as well as give him a chance to reform," Goku said, putting his arms behind his head. "I can definitely see how you guys would have problems with him, but don't worry. It shouldn't take too long before you can deal with him pretty easily."

He grinned, but jolted when he heard a low rumbling. He grasped his stomach, a shy grin on his face.

"By the way… What kind of food do you have in your world?" Goku asked as he scratched his cheek. "Beating up a delusional dragon makes one surprisingly hungry…"

(Classic Loop 38.8) (Feat: Masterweaver)

"Hey, Hunter?"

"Yeah, Spyro?"

"I can kinda understand how you get to these weird places fast, since you're an athlete and all. And the professor, well, he's a mole, so tunnels make sense. In fact, Elora's probably pretty quick on her hooves, too, come to think of it..."

He gestured towards a bear with a sack. "Moneybags, though? Sometimes I swear he's in two places at once! And he's, like, ludicrously overweight. How does he—?"

"Spyro, I'm going to cut you off there." Hunter crossed his arms, an uncharacteristically serious look on his face. "As the anchor, you have a duty to stay sane, right?"

"Well... Basically, yeah."

"Then trust me on this: NEVER ask that question. Never investigate." The cheetah stared into the distance with a tortured gaze. "And never try to follow that bear. It just isn't worth it."

(Fused loops 38.9)

"So… Let me get this straight," Classic said, his gaze fixed on his loop brother with an amused smirk. "During one of your variants, those sky pirate things were hunting a supposedly super-powerful Naga for the purpose of making it a gladiator in their arena, right?"

"Yes." Legend sighed. He wasn't sure *how* the topic had gotten onto this, maybe something to do with common variant loops for their branches, but part of him wished he had kept his maw shut.

"Then, after hearing about the super-powerful Naga gladiator and coming to a totally-not-suspicious ominous cave," Classic said, a grin on his face as he narrowed his eyes, "instead of leaving the possibly violent beasty alone, you jumped into the cave without a second thought to warn him."

"... *Yes.* " Legend hung his head low. In hindsight, he really *should* have seen the warning signs.

"And thus, surprise, surprise, the Naga didn't take too kindly to random purple dragons busting into his home and you had to fight him off, all the while unable to effectively use your elements because of his shield absorbing them *and* repeatedly getting bopped in the head by falling rocks."

"How was *I* supposed to know he was carrying around a shield that blocks dragon elements?" Legend said, his expression flat. "He was neither an ape nor a participant in the war."

"Really, with what you told me about your branch, I wouldn't be surprised if little bunny rabbits were carrying around anti-dragon weaponry." Classic smirked as he rested his head on his paw. "Still

though, because of *all* of that, upon finally beating the how-could-he-possibly-be-so-violent creature, you were so worn out that, despite your looping experience, those sky pirates managed to jump you and take you back to their ship for their sport."

" *Yes.* " Legend groaned, draping his paw over his eyes not moments later.

Classic grinned. "And you call *me* the reckless idiot."

(Fused Loop 38.10) (feat: Masterweaver)

"...Wait, so, in these Speedways, you deliberately crash into people who are innocently riding around in their vehicles?"

Classic looked at Legend, held up a claw, paused, and blinked. "...Huh. When you put it that way, it sounds cruel—"

"Your world is sick," Legend growled.

(A/N: Not much to really say about this chapter. All I can really bring up is things have been a right experience here with my personal life, and that's about it. With any luck, we may be moving to a quieter house soon, which will hopefully mean an easier time writing chapters and such for me.

In the meantime, I'm trying a more expressive writing style than what I've been doing. Forgot if I already brought this up, but some personal research has shown that I've been taking "show, don't tell" to insane lengths, and it's been taking its toll on my writing. As such, I'm trying to undo the damage it caused with my writing style, but so far it's been slow going.

Oh, also, the lead artist of LoS recently did a Q.A. where he went into a lot of stuff about what they couldn't add into the games while the trilogy was going strong, in addition to

confirming a boatload of stuff, among other things, so... Expect quite a bit of info loops in the future.

… And that's about it. So, without further ado, here are the loop comments/names:

38.1: On the plus side, it'll help him easily beat his enemies. It'll take him two hundred chapters to do so, but still. /shot

38.2: Just because he's purple doesn't mean upper-class mannerisms run in his family.

38.3: Hard to tell if Classic would be any better or worse about that…

38.4: And that's pretty much all we're saying about that. This isn't an Innortal style loop series, after all…

38.5: It's all fun and games until a non-looper has a freakout over the loops.

38.6: Hi. Welcome to the Infinite Loops. /shot

38.7: When faced with a near Eldritch abomination dragon that refuses to go down, sometimes it's best to have an even bigger humanoid abomination to take care of things for you.

38.8: Moneybags would be willing to tell them…for a nominal fee, of course.

38.9: So… The GBA adaption of tEN is pretty neat, admittedly. I kind of like it a bit better than the console version, plus it expands on a lot of things, too, which means more loop fodder… Which is always good.

38.10: Granted, I don't think sending apes flying with snow boulders, TNT, normal boulders, and the like is much better, but…)

An Apology, Explanation, and a Thank You

So... Hey. Been a while.

I'm sure everyone has been wondering what happened to the Spyro loops. Why it seemed to disappear all of a sudden, and why I just seemed to disappear off the face of the net for a few years. I have an explanation; both long and short.

The short version is: My life went to complete and utter hell inbetween the previous chapter and this explanation/wrap-up I'm writing here. :D /shot

The long explanation: It all started two or so years ago. At the time we were living with my grandma at the time. We've never exactly been the most finacially stable family at the time, but we were adquate enough at the time that we could easily keep our heads above water at the time. However, Through a series of circumstances that I'd rather not go into, another few family members wanted us to move in together so that we could afford a better neighborhood and a bigger house. They were considered good family and friends of ours at the time, so it seemed like a win-win, right?

Unfortunately, at the time, we had no idea that it basically meant: 'Hey, mind if we mooch off you while sending you all into massive credit card dept in the process? K thx! :D'

By the time we already figured this out to be the case, the damage had already been done. We're still trying to recover from this disaster, and the bad blood it caused in our family at the time, naturally, didn't make for the best writing environment.

At the same time, while I was still in the loops community on Space Battles, it was less than... Pleasant at the time, too. There was a *a lot* of bad blood between the writers at the time who weren't directly

involved in the Spyro loops. I could go into detail but, to keep things short, it could be summed up as everyone trying to impose their views of how the loops should work on everyone else's loops compilation and inciting massive infighting almost every other day. It got so bad that, at one point, a mod had to come in and basically threaten to pull the plug on the entire project unless everyone got their act together... Which only served to cause even *more* infighting at the time.

Naturally, this *also* didn't serve well for a productive writing environment at the time, either.

It didn't help that pretty much any idea that I had that wasn't 'extremely morally ambiguous 'funny' situations and shenanigans' was almost immediately shutdown by anyone who wasn't involved in the Spyro loops directly.

Try to explore the implications of a person being forced to go through a bad loop/baseline (again)? 'WTF, why aren't you having them curb stomp everything!?' Try to explore the implications of someone else messing with a loop when they do *not* want them to? 'Jeeze man, lighten up! It's just a fic!' Try to actually have *character developement* and not exaggerate them to the point that even season 20+ Simpson would raise an eyebrow at them? 'What is this angsty emo crap!? The loops are for funny one hundred percent of the time, even if it completely rapes the original characterization of the character in question!'

These were just *some* of the responses I got over my time writing this. Needless to say, this made trying to work on further chapters of the Spyro loops... Difficult, to say the least. The point that finally broke me out of disgust was when one loop writer, who was in *no way* involved in the Spyro loops at the time, threw a massive hissy-fit when he found out I was going to try and write GoldenGriffiness' Cynder from her fic The Legend of Cynder into the story as a looper seperate from canon Cynder. He went on a massive tyrade about how he despies original characters being in the loops in *the same*

exact thread that the Mod posted threatening to pull the plug on the loops altogether for this exact behavior!

This, also, was not going into the blatant hypocritisy in his 'argument', since this same exact person also worked on the Friendship is Magic loops, which had Nyx, an alternative take on Luna's evil alter ego who originated from a popular FiM fic at the time, who was basically in the same boat that I wanted to do with LoC Cynder. And Nyx wasn't even the only one! About half the looping cast consist of background characters from the show who are basically OCs in their own right!

Naturally, this was another major blow to my will to write for the loops since it seemed like the Spyro specifically were being targeted over the years simply because they weren't some massive mega popular show/game/movie at the time like FiM. Heck, even when I logged some legitimate complaints at the FiM loops, like how half the FiM characters barely resembled their show selves anymore, or how they were reaching blatant Mary Sue levels in power/fixing ability, I just got insults thrown my way because how *dare* I question *anything* that is done in the FiM loops, characterization wise or otherwise.

The crower was when I was hoping to drum up some hype for an amazing looking indie game on kickstarter at the time (which, unrelated; if you haven't checked out Nefarious on Steam, you really should! It's really amazing by Indie standards!) By having the main character from it show up and attempt to kidnap one of the Princesses by using a smoke grenade to distract the cast.

Almost immidately after posting that snip, someone damn near gave me a death threat because I *didn't* portray the cast immidately stomping his ass into the ground from the very second the smoke grenade came through the window. Because as we all know, being trapped in a time loop completely gets rid of delayed human (or in this case, pony) reaction time and Twilight 'Sue' Sparkle should have *obviously* teleported the grenade away before it came through the window, and should have *obviously* blown Crow's head off with a mere thought. After all, it's just *common sense.*

Before you ask; Yes. That was the exact argument he made about it. Because 'common sense' apparently now means 'this character is a flawless golden god who can never get caught off guard'. Somehow, I don't think that means what they think it means.

Despite this, my loop was rejected. Because how dare I portray any of the characters as flawless beings. :/

Yeah. Again, this did not do much for a productive writing environment.

To put it short; the loops just, sadly, is not a healthy fan community, at least at the time when I finally broke away from my Stockholm syndrome and left. Everyone thinks their opinion is law and that if you don't follow it then *you're* the problem... *Even if you don't bring it up to them in the first place!*

If I could give an example of a healthy fan community, I would easily point towards Fallout Equestria. (Also, I apologize for all the pony examples; I haven't cared for the show since season two myself.) Everything about it is given broad strokes from author to author; everyone is allowed to do their own thing with their own stories even if it comflicts with anothers view or canon. Stories can intersect but not every detail needs to fit the others stories to a T. Heck, even the characters from the original story that started it all are *actually allowed to have legitimate flaws and are allowed to actually lose some battles* , despite the fact that they live in a post-apoclyptic world and would have far more legitimate reasons to be on edge and have a good amount of power on under their belts.

This, in my personal opinion, is what the loops should have tried to emulate. Not this massive mess of a continuity that everyone is trying to hammer together with blow torchings and then turning said blow torches on each other when someone disagrees. In the end, a community like that only ends up driving people away more than it brings people in.

I know this from experience; not just from this fic series, but from several RP Forums as well, most of them having long since gone belly-up because of this. Heck, the whole reason I turned to fanfics over RPs was to *escape* this exact behaviour.

I digress, though. I don't want to completely leave the loops on a sour note either, so I will say; the users who actually gave the Spyro loops a chance, actually attempted to do something that *hasn't* been done with the premise yet, were absolutely amazing. AbZ, Ukelele... I don't know where you guys went to after this fic, but thank you. You guys really helped make the Spyro loops what they were. I don't think I could have gotten as far as I did without you guys, and you really helped me improve as a writer overall.

So, now that I've gotten all this off my chest, I suppose I should at least give an idea of where the meta-plot with the entire looping cast acting together in the joint city was going. It's been a long while, so I only remember the very basics of the plot, but...

Basically, when Classic went into Flame's mind, he would in turn encounter this universes Malefor's mental world. He would then learn about exactly how mess-up his past in the loop was. He was basically one giant science experment to the Aquarians, who were attempting to use Malefor to tap into Convexity. The result is that, after taking one of their experients too far, Malefor because the dragon we all know and love and created what would become known as the fall.(? I think that's what we called it?)

Once Classic returned to lucidity, he would tell the group about what happen and about Malefor's past. After some discussion, Legend finally asserts that despite what his tragic past may be, that still doesn't excempt him from his actions now, and that they must stop Malefor at any cost.

So, after they finally stormed his lair, the pre-insane Malefor, thanks to Classic's tampering with his mental world, would start to assert himself again. He would subconciously start using his power to

create a version of his younger self out of vines that would act as pre-insane Malefor's body for the time being.

After a massive fight, Classic encounters pre-insane Malefor and the two talk things out. Pre-insane Malefor states that he can't stop his insane self and that they have no choice but to stop him, even if it means he'll die too.

The massive battle finally ensues between Legends Spyro and Malefor. Being much more experienced at this point, Legend Spyro easily has the upper hand, mopping the floor with the crazed Malefor before finally having him in between his claws. He's about to strike the finale blow before Classic shows up in the nick of time.

The two argue about whether or not Malefor deserves to die for what he does. I don't remember the specifics of the argument but, I believe it would bring up Legends overall development in the arc and how Classic doesn't want him to go dark again. After much convincing, Legend Spyro finally stands down. Classic then talks to Malefor, who, after a while, realises he met him in his mental world.

Pre-insane Malefor shows up and the two talk, finally able to let go of their grudge against the Aquarians and merge back once again. Realising all the terrible acts Malefor has done, Malefor apologises, using all his energy to shut off his army of golems and heal any dragons he's hurt in the process. However, with the last of his energy finally drained, he begins to fade away.

After returning home, the characters discuss everything that's happened. Legends thanks Classic for everything, from helping him settle things with his inner darkness and turmoil and help keep him from going through with an act that may have brought it back. They shake hands and, at long last, the mega-arc would come to a close.

Had the loops gone on, pre-insane Malefor would have become a 'glitch' in Yggdrasil's code. Think Vanellope from Wreck-It-Ralph meets Danny Phantom, basically. His characterization and redemption would allow him to get around the 'no evil entity' looper

patch Yggdrasil has and soon become a regular looper alongside the main cast. His characterization would have likely been what I think Malefor was like before he went batcrap crazy in canon; basically Classic, but with a more sense of responsibility.

There were more plot elements I know we were working on but I'll be damned if I can remember them at this point.

So, there you have it. Not a perfect ending, but an ending none the less.

If I could have provided an actual ending, it would have likely been with some massive MLE causing the Spyro branches to start coming together. The characters would fight and beat it, but the end result would be their realities merging into the one seen in the meta-plot throughout these loops, minus the batcrap crazy dragon and his killbot golem... Things.

Naturally, I doubt people would have been happy with that, even if I didn't end the loops themselves. I don't see it actually happening if I continued this, but I can dream.

So, I bet you're wondering why I didn't work on anything else in the meantime once I broke off from the loops. At the very least, why didn't I give this massive explanation far earlier than I did?

In short, after everything that happened, I fell into a mass depression spell for the past two years. Even after breaking off from those mooching family members, thing just seemed like a downward spiral with no light at the end of the tunnel. There was still a lot of family in fighting, with threats of my core family splitting up because one of their attitudes at the time, and it was not helped by the fact that the place they work at is run by the biggest cheapskate we've ever seen. The dude once ripped us off a goddamn *penny* from our paychecks! I'm not exaggerating here!

And then, after we moved back in with my grandma, we found out she had stage four cancer...

Yeah. This didn't help my depression at all, to say the least.

I don't think it's far fetched to say the last year was easily the single hardest year of my life. Because of all of this, opening a doc to write was a massive uphill battle, let alone actually writing anything more than a sentence. There were several points I was almost driven to do... Something drastic, putting it one way. I had to go on medication at one point to help me get out of bed in the morning; medication that *also* made it incredibly hard for me to think up story ideas, even if it helped curb my depressive spells at the time.

In short, everything kept falling apart and just trying to push forward with daily life was a challenge, let alone doing something I actually enjoyed for a change.

I'm not sure what else to say really. It just sucked horribly to be me at the time. Not to mention the massive gut punches the universe like to taunt me with when things finally seemed to get better. It was one step forward, two steps back. The crowner has to be when we finally found out that my grandma had beaten her cancer; something thought impossible since she had only a 15% survival rate! ... Only to die a month later because her lungs ended up giving out on her thanks to catching pnemonia ontop of alreadying having bad lungs.

Yeah.

Despite everything, though... I think we're starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The family infighting has more or less stopped at this point. We're finally looking for a new place of work after dealing with an asshole boss for the past few years. While it sucked massive to lose a family member, at least she's not in pain anymore, and we're finally starting to move past the grieving process.

We're still recovering from the dept but at least we have a stable home for the time being. Not the best of places, admittedly, but at

least we have a roof over our heads.

I'm also finally stable enough to no longer need medication of any kind. I've actually been exercising regularly recently; something I would have seen as pointless a year or so ago. The best part? I'm *finally* getting back into writing!

... However, it's not Spyro fanfiction I'm writing.

Or fanfiction of any kind, for that matter.

I'm currently working on an original novel, using everything I've learned over the years from my friends and fellow writers. In the span of week/two weeks, I've already broken the 20,000-word mark. May not seem amazing to you guys but after two years of not even being able to open a doc, this is a massive accomplishment for me.

I guess you can say this is my 'final goodbye' to fanfiction for the time being. If by some chance, I do get this book published, I'm not sure of the legality of these fics I've written over the years. I may need to remove them, I may be able to keep them up... It'll depend on the legal grey areas and how they react. I don't think I'll be able to continue to write for my fics, at least, if it happens.

So, to everyone who's followed me over the years, and those who kept checking back to see if I've done anything in the meantime; thank you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. If it wasn't for you guys, I probably wouldn't have had the guts to pursue my dream of being a writer in the first place. I wish I could have done more for you guys. I really wish I could.

So, with that, I bid you all farewell. However, I do have one final request:

If you enjoyed the Spyro loops, please, continue to use the Spyro universe in creative ways. Interpret the characters in ways not amoung the norm in the fandom. Heck, I'd like to think I'm partially responsible for there being more vocal Ember defenders on the net

who are tired of the 'psycho yandere for Spyro' characterization she's been given since the very start of the Legend of Spyro series. Ember really is a character with a lot of potential, so it's nice to think I helped people realize that with my stories.

It doesn't even have to be about Ember, either. We've all seen the sheer number of 'Mr. Marty Mc Navy seal Stu Pants from the 'real' world gets sucked into the game universe' or 'Ms. Flawlessly Perfect Silky Smooth Sue Pants from the 'real' world has been sucked into the game world AND turned into a dragon in the process' flooding the archive as of late. I think it's impossible to at least take note of it.

However, this is seriously squandering the potential of the franchise as a whole. The Spyro loops are the only fic I've seen in the archive that has attempted to at least have the two (or even three, if you consider Skylander's a Spyro universe) interacting with each other.

We've seen Cynder angst about her past countless times. How many fics have attempted to show how the war has affected Spyro's psyche, though? How he's attempting to readjust into a dragon society when he was raised by bugs? The possible implications that his and Cynder's relationship may just be a mutual way to keep each other sane?

Even the Classicverse has a lot of potentials. How would the characters react if Spyro just disappeared one day when he was whisked into the Legends reboot? Who would fill his place to stop the villains of that universe, and how would everyone handle losing a close friend? Heck, Spyro not having any known parents in the Classic universe has so much potential for character development and exploration in itself!

Heck, there's also this one big fan theory that the Legend universe is actually a prequel to the Classic universe. This is an amazing premise and I'd love to see some stories on the subject!

There are so many good ideas and situations available to the Spyro universes than just 'wish fulfillment character enters game world and

proceeds to do wish fulfillment things'. Don't let it go to waste! As I used to say back in the day before everything happened:

'Challenge the norm! Don't be afraid to think different!'

And with that; this is TokoWH, signing off for the final time.

Have a nice day!